



St Helen's  
Bishopsgate

BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

# Big Picture course

## Member's manual



# Big Picture

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## **Why do the Big Picture course?**

If you were to visit a city for the first time and ask someone to show you the most famous city building, it would be of little help if they began by showing you only the detail of a cornice or a door handle without first enabling you to see the whole building from an appropriate distance. In the same way, to understand the Bible correctly, we need to see its big picture or main storyline. Without the big picture, we lack the context for any part of the Bible – we don't know where we are in the overall message. With the big picture, we know where we are and can therefore make more sense of what is happening. We wouldn't think of opening a novel in the middle and trying to understand the events taking place. To do so risks missing the point of what is happening; the same is true of the Bible.

The Big Picture course will help us to step back and see how the Bible fits together into one coherent whole. As we look at the major themes of the Bible, we will cover issues such as: Does God have a plan for the world? How does Jesus fit in? What is God like? This will deepen our understanding of what the Bible has to say about God, us and the world we live in.

## **How to make the most of the Big Picture course**

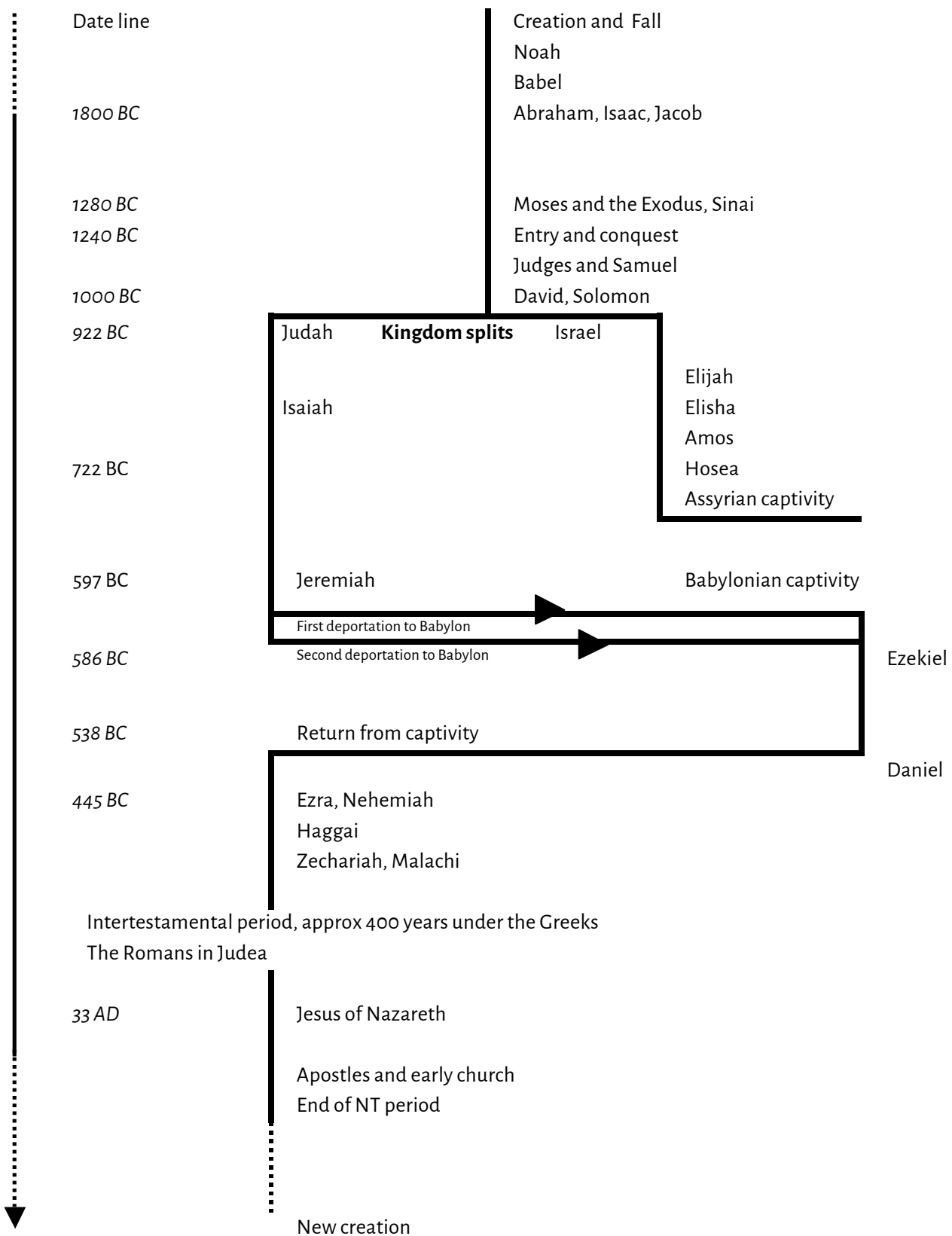
You will see that there are twelve studies. It would be a great help if you read the relevant passage(s) and look at the suggested questions yourself before the group meets. This way you will get more out of each session and will benefit others as you make your contributions during the discussion.

We hope that the sessions will be as relaxed as Christianity Explored – during each study there will be plenty of time to discuss questions and issues arising from your own study of each week's Bible passages, so do jot down questions and comments.

We are not making any assumptions about background knowledge or your current beliefs about any of the issues we have been discussing in Christianity Explored. The purpose of the "Story So Far" section at the beginning of each study is not to assume that everyone believes the summary text, but just to recap on the story of the Bible as seen in the previous studies.

Don't forget Jesus' first words when he came on the scene – "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel" (Mark 1v15). Jesus thinks it's urgent that people respond to him. As you go through the studies, think through whether the stuff you are learning is helping you to trust Jesus.

## Timeline of the Bible



## The God who has a plan

### Ephesians 1:1-14

The apostle Paul was a missionary sent by Jesus to spread the gospel among people from both Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds. The book of Ephesians is a letter which he wrote to a bunch of people in the area around Ephesus (part of modern day Turkey). They had already become Christians, and Paul is writing to encourage them to keep going in their new faith. He does this by reminding them that God is hugely powerful and has fantastic plans and purposes for his people.

#### HEALTH WARNING!

Paul's writing style is very different from Mark's 'story-teller' method. He writes more like a lawyer (don't let that put you off!), cramming a lot of ideas into a few sentences to make his argument - you might need to read the chunk of text through a couple of times to make any sense of it. Don't worry if it feels like hard work to read - make a note of words and phrases which are new to you (Paul uses some terms that you won't have heard Mark using) and we'll discuss them in the session.



#### For starters

1. How do you view God? Do you view him as having a plan/purpose for the world? If so, what would you say his plan is?



#### Investigate

2. Read Ephesians 1:1-14. List all the things that God has done for the Ephesians.
  
3. What is God's plan (1:3-14)? Why is God seeking to achieve this plan? (1:6,12,14)

4. What is God the Father's part in the plan and what is Jesus' role? What does this teach us about God the Father and Jesus?

### Thinking it through



5. When we look at the world, why is it hard to believe God has a plan and that he will accomplish it?

6. How does what we learn in Ephesians 1:3-14 help us understand God's priorities for the world?

7. Why do you think we have studied Ephesians 1 at the beginning of the Big Picture course?



### Home study: Genesis 1

1. What repeated words and phrases do you notice in Genesis 1?

2. What do we learn about God? What do we learn about the world?

## The God who made the world

### Genesis 1, 3

#### The story so far

The Bible's account of God and his plan for eternity begins with God's creation of the world. However, the paradise that God originally created is ruined as early as Genesis 3 when mankind rebel against God, often known as the Fall. This is not the end of the story but really the beginning – the Bible is about what God does in response to the events of Genesis 3.



#### For starters

1. If you were to go onto the street and do a survey, what words do you think people would use to describe God? Write a list.



#### Investigate

2. Quickly read Genesis 1:1 – 2:3, noting down any words or phrases that are repeated. What are the main things we learn about God and the world?
3. What do we learn about mankind and our place in God's world? What is the order of authority that God establishes in the world (1:27-28)?
4. Read Genesis 2:15-17 and 3:1-24. What are Adam and Eve caused to doubt about God? How are they trying to change the order of authority?

In light of Genesis 1, why is their rebellion so serious?

5. What are the consequences of their rebellion (3:7-24)?

6. What evidence is there of hope for humanity in Genesis 3?



### Thinking it through

7. How does Genesis 1-3 describe God? What words would you use to describe him? How has your own thinking changed?

8. 'I can't believe in God when the world is in so much of a mess.' What would Genesis 1-3 say in answer to this comment?

9. Read Colossians 1:16. What is Jesus' role in creation?



### Home study: Genesis 3, Revelation 21:1-8

1. What are the differences between the world at the end of Genesis 3, and the world in Revelation 21? Use the table below to compare and contrast.

	Genesis 3	Revelation 21
Relationship between God and man		
Land		
Life/death		
Curse/sin		
Blessings		



## The God who will re-make the world

### Revelation 21:1-22:6

#### The story so far

The Bible's account of God and his plan for eternity begins with God's creation of the world in Genesis 1-2. God's sheer greatness and power is breathtaking as he creates everything from nothing, simply by speaking. God's created world is very good and, although God is in charge of his world, his rule over his creation is delegated to mankind.

However, God's paradise is ruined in Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve are seduced by the serpent into doubting God's word and God's goodness. The heart of their rebellion is that they long to be like God (Genesis 3:5) which is both scandalous (as God is the creator and ruler of the world) and foolish (as mankind is not like God). Mankind's rebellion leads to a terrible judgement from God – all of creation is cursed, mankind's relationship with God is ruined and relationships between people are ruined. The only glimmers of hope are God's promise that the serpent will one day be crushed (3:15) and God's continued provision of good things to Adam and Eve (3:21).

The rest of the Bible can be viewed as God putting right what went wrong at the Fall. In fact, God is going to do more than simply restore the paradise of Eden. God will create a wonderful new heaven and new earth far superior to Eden. Revelation 21 – 22 is the best glimpse of God's new creation.



#### For starters

1. What are your main aims and goals in life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What is your view of heaven? How does it affect the way you live?



#### Investigate

3. Read Revelation 21:1-22:6. What will happen to the 'first' creation? What do you think this means?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. From what we saw in Genesis 3 (see Study 2), why does this have to happen?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Complete the table below to compare and contrast the situation in Genesis 3 with that in Revelation 21.

	Genesis 3	Revelation 21
Relationship between God and man		
Land		
Life/death		
Curse/sin		
Blessings		

6. What is the significance of the similarities between the 'first' creation and the new creation? What is the significance of the differences?



### Thinking it through

1. What big questions are left unanswered after studying Genesis 1-3 and Revelation 21?
  
2. How has this passage challenged your view of what heaven (i.e. God's new creation) is like?



### Home study: Genesis 12: 1-20

1. What are the main things which are promised to Abram in this passage?

2. Look again at your table from Study 2. Which (if any) of the effects of Genesis 3 are dealt with in this passage?

	Genesis 3	Genesis 12
Relationship between God and man		
Land		
Life/death		
Curse/sin		
Blessings		

## The God who makes promises

### Genesis 12

#### The story so far

The Bible's account of God's plan for the whole of history is not simply to put right what went wrong at the Fall and to rescue his people from this fallen world. God will create a wonderful new heaven and new earth far superior to Eden.

The new creation is pictured in Revelation 21 as a stunning and secure city without any rebellion (21:27) or the consequences of such rebellion (21:4). The people of God have access to the Tree of Life which was out of their reach after the Fall and we are specifically told that 'no longer will there be any curse' (22:3). Even more wonderful, however, is the picture of restored relationship between God and his people (21:3) who will be gathered from all nations (21:24-26).

God begins to promise how he will achieve his plan in Genesis 12. This set of promises is one of the key turning points in the Bible.



#### For starters

1. What are the various means by which the world can be made into a better place, according to what people generally think?
2. What big questions are left unanswered after looking at Genesis 1-3 and Revelation 21?



#### Investigate

3. Read Genesis 12:1-7. What are the main things that God promises Abram (later called Abraham) in these verses?

4. Complete the table below to relate the promises of Genesis 12 with the events of Genesis 3.

	<b>Genesis 3</b>	<b>Genesis 12</b>
<b>Relationship between God and man</b>	Relationship between God and man ruined	
<b>Land</b>	Thrown out of Eden	
<b>Life/death</b>	No access to tree of life (death introduced, no future)	
<b>Curse/sin</b>	Presence of sin and curses	
<b>Blessings</b>	No significant blessings	

What does this teach us about what God is beginning to do?

5. What has Abraham done to deserve these promises?

6. How does Abraham respond to the promises (see 12:1-9)? How is he different from Adam and Eve in Genesis 3?

Describe Abraham's faith in God (see 12:10-20)? What does it tell us about God that he chooses to bless people like that?



### Thinking it through

7. To what extent are the promises to Abraham fulfilled in the new creation described in Revelation 21?
8. How does Abraham show what faith looks like?
9. What would / does it mean in practise to put your faith in Jesus?



### Home study: Exodus 1-12

Exodus follows the events surrounding Abraham's descendents, the Israelites.

1. Skim read Exodus 1-11. Where are the Israelites? What problem do they find themselves in?
2. How does God intervene?
3. What two things is Israel rescued from in Exodus 12?

## The God who rescues Israel

### Exodus 12

#### The story so far

At the start of the Bible, God creates the world and sets apart mankind to enjoy relationship with him and to look after his creation. However, mankind rebel against their creator and, as a result, suffer God's right anger and punishment (Genesis 3). They face toil, enmity, death and separation from God. Rebellion remains an ever-present problem from Genesis 3 onwards – even flooding the whole world and starting afresh with the most righteous man, Noah (Genesis 6), deals with neither rebellion nor death. Something altogether different is required before the Fall can be reversed and the new creation (Revelation 21-22) can come about.

We looked at one of the key turning points in the Bible in Study 4, Genesis 12. God promises that he himself will act to reverse the effects of the Fall. God promises Abram (later called Abraham): many descendants, a land in which to dwell, blessing for himself and other nations, and a relationship with God.

However, the early chapters of the book of Exodus begin with such thoughts a million miles away. Abraham's descendants have become a nation: Israel. However, they still do not have a land of their own, and are in slavery in Egypt.



#### For starters

1. Read Exodus 2:23-24; 3:15-17. What does God plan to do and why?
2. Skim read Exodus 3-11. List the main things that happened in the run up to Exodus 12.



#### Investigate

3. Read Exodus 12. From what two things is Israel rescued in chapter 12? Why are both necessary?
4. How does God accomplish each of the rescues referred to in question 1? How does the Passover lamb avert God's judgement?

5. What is Israel rescued for? (6:8, 7:16, 8:1, 9:1, 12:25). Why is each aspect significant?

What else do we learn about the way God rescues his people? (e.g. 9:4-7)

6. What is God teaching about himself through his rescue of the Israelites (see 9:14-16)?
7. How are God's people to remember these events? (12:14-20, 24-27)? Given your answer to question 6, why is this important?



### Thinking it through

8. The Passover is used in the Bible as a pattern of God's ultimate rescue of humanity. From studies 1-4, what parallels are there between God's rescue of his people here and what we learned in Christianity Explored about how God rescues people through the work of Jesus? (Think about why God rescues them, from what they're rescued, and the manner in which the rescue takes place).
9. What questions are still left unanswered?
10. Read the second sentence of 1 Corinthians 5:7. How does the Bible view Jesus' role in God's rescue of mankind?



### Home Study: Exodus 19:1-6



1. What are the nation of Israel promised in these verses? What do you think this means?

2. How are Israel to obtain this blessing? Is this different to how Abraham did?

## The God who makes a deal with Israel

### Exodus 19, Deuteronomy 28, Jeremiah 11

#### The story so far

Although God has promised in Genesis 12 to reverse the effects of the Fall, the situation in Exodus 1-11 looked bleak. God's people Israel were hardly a nation and, although they were numerous, they were slaves in Egypt to Pharaoh. However, God heard their crying and remembered his covenant with Abraham (Exodus 2:23). God called Moses and revealed to him the God that he is and the rescue he was about to bring about. The rescue of Israel from Egypt (known as the Exodus) is very significant as it provides a pattern which teaches us much about how God ultimately rescues humanity.

Exodus 12 teaches that God rescues his people **from** slavery **and** judgement by punishing his enemies. God does so **through** the death of a substitute Passover Lamb whose blood marks them out as God's people. And God rescues his people **for** relationship with himself. So significant are these things that Israel is told again and again to remember lest they forget their rescue and...their God!



#### For starters

1. How do people like to think they can get to heaven?



#### Investigate

2. Read Exodus 19:1-8. How does God offer to bless Israel? What do the terms in 19:5-6 mean?
3. What must Israel do to obtain this blessing? How does this differ from the promises made to Abraham (Genesis 12)? How do the Israelites respond?

God unpacks this agreement with the Israelites several times. Read Deuteronomy 28:1-14 and 28:58-68.

4. What are the main ways in which God's people will be rewarded if they obey God? (Deut 28:1-14) How do these rewards compare with the promises made to Abraham?
5. What are the main ways in which God's people will be punished if they disobey God? (Deut 28:58-68)

6. Read Jeremiah 11:1-11. What is the prophet's charge against Israel? Why is this so serious?
7. Look back at your answer to question 3. What does Jeremiah 11 tell us about Israel's chances of success? Why is that?



### Thinking it through

8. What were the consequences of this failure to obey for Israel? (See 2 Kings 25)
9. How does it challenge our thinking today about God and about how we can get to heaven?
10. Remember the question from week 4 of Christianity Explored – if you were to die tonight and God said “why should I let you into heaven?” what would you say. How would you answer it now?



### Home study: 2 Samuel 7:1-17

1. What does God promise for Israel (v9-11)? How does this compare to Abraham's promises?
2. What does God promise about David's descendent (v12-16)? Who does it sound like?

## The God who will send a great king

### 2 Samuel 7:1-17

#### The story so far

God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 looks doubtful. Having saved his descendents, Israel, from slavery in Egypt, he has committed to fulfilling his promise to Abraham through a covenant. However, unlike the promise to Abraham, this is conditional on Israel keeping his commandments. Obedience will lead to great blessing, just as God promised to Abraham; but disobedience will lead to curse and judgement for the whole nation. And Israel was a disobedient people.

Having settled in a new land, Canaan, Israel failed to keep the terms of their covenant with God, and - true to his word - God brought judgement upon them in the form of attack from surrounding nations. When Israel repented, God rescued them, but they fell into disobedience again. The cycle repeated itself until eventually Israel called out for a king, to be 'like all the nations' (1 Sam 8:5). God granted this request with King Saul and then King David. David was much better than his predecessor, but still failed to rule perfectly. Yet God chose to bless him, as we are about to see.



#### For starters

1. If a friend asked you, 'What's the Old Testament all about?', what would you say?
2. Think back to before you started The Big Picture. In what ways is your answer different now to what it would have been back then?



#### Investigate

3. Read 2 Samuel 7: 1-17. What does David want to do for God? What does God say?
4. What does God promise for David (v9, v11-16)?
5. What does God promise for Israel (v10-11)?

How does this compare to the promises made to Abraham?

	Genesis 12	2 Samuel 7
<b>Relationship between God and man</b>	Relationship with God closer, but not restored to the way it was	
<b>Land</b>	Promise of land/Canaan	
<b>Life/death</b>	Death still present, but everlasting descendents	
<b>Curse/sin</b>	Sin still present	
<b>Blessings</b>	Blessings to Abraham, and through him to the other nations	

6. Look at Isaiah 9:6-7. What more does this tell us about David's descendant?



### Thinking it through

7. 2 Samuel 7:17 says that Nathan the prophet relayed all this information to David. Imagine you are Nathan. How would you summarise the promises that God made to David?
8. Who do you think the descendant of David may be talking about? How well do the descriptions in 2 Samuel 7 and Isaiah 9 fit?
9. If this is talking about Jesus, how does this study help us know how to respond to him?

## The Story So Far...

The Bible says that God has a plan to bring everything under Jesus' rule for God's glory and praise (Ephesians 1). However, after 7 studies this looks a long way off. God's perfect world is ruined by mankind's rebellion, and humanity has been punished by God by being judged and ejected from his presence (Genesis 1-3). Still, God promises not simply to reverse the effects of the Fall but to bless Abraham's descendants with a land of their own and a relationship with the living God (Genesis 12). God shows that Israel's captivity in Egypt will not prevent his plan from being fulfilled as he powerfully rescues her from slavery and from his mighty judgement on the Egyptians (Exodus 12).

In study 6, we looked at the deal that God made with Moses at Mount Sinai which established the terms of Israel's relationship with God for the rest of the Old Testament. It is as foundational as the promises to Abraham in Genesis 12, though in a different way. A grasp of it is essential if we are to understand both the Old Testament and what Jesus came to do.

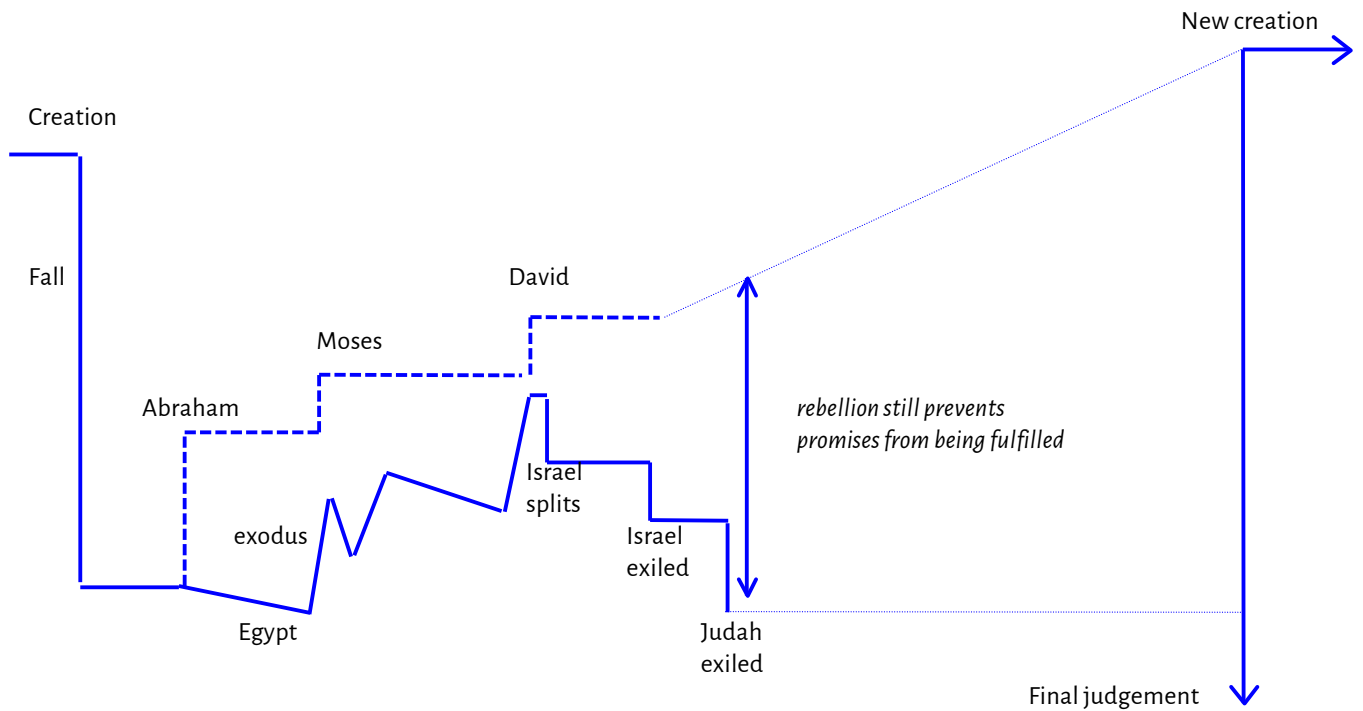
The promises in the Mosaic covenant deal with the same issues as the promises to Abraham, i.e. relationship with God, a land, blessing and a great nation. However, they are explained in greater detail and actually offer much more than Genesis 12 indicated. However, the most important feature of the Mosaic covenant is that it is conditional. Israel will only obtain the promises if she obeys God's commandments. If she disobeys God then she will face God's anger and be punished. We last saw her, in Jeremiah 11, clearly disobeying and in breach of the covenant and awaiting imminent judgement from God.

A good and strong leader will help to prevent Israel rebelling too much. However, the people cry out for a king, not to help them be more obedient, but so that they can be like the other nations. First Saul, then David become king. David is Israel's greatest king in the Old Testament. He subdues Israel's enemies within Canaan and fully conquers the land. In David's reign and that of his son, Solomon, Israel gets closer than at any time to obtaining what God has promised. However, this relatively happy time does not last and does not result in God's promises being properly fulfilled because Israel still keeps rebelling against God. Even David and Solomon sin. Importantly, God makes a covenant with David, promising that his descendant will help Israel to do what is right and will actually succeed in accomplishing what is necessary for God's promises to be fulfilled (see 2 Samuel 7).

The story of the next 400 years (2 Samuel 8 – 2 Kings 25) is of how the promised king does not appear. As a result of her rebellion, Israel ends up in a position worse than she was before the exodus. Three principle disasters occur (see the Time Line of the Bible on page 2):

- In 922 BC, the Kingdom of Israel splits into two – the northern Kingdom (called Israel - but also referred to as Ephraim and Samaria) and the southern Kingdom (called Judah). Judah contains the Davidic monarchy, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple;
- In 722 BC, Assyria, the emerging superpower in the area, conquers the northern Kingdom and the survivors disappear (2 Kings 17). Assyria invades Judah but does not succeed in destroying her (2 Kings 18-19); and
- Then in 586 BC, Babylon conquers Judah and takes her into captivity (2 Kings 25).

## God's plan now looks like this



### Home study: Ezekiel 34

1. Who do you think the sheep are in this passage? Who are the shepherds?
2. What have the shepherds done wrong?
3. What does God promise will happen? Who is going to do it?

## The God who will send a good shepherd

### Ezekiel 34

#### The story so far

God has made great promises to Abraham and his descendants but, at this point in their history, the people of Israel are miles away from enjoying them. However, Israel's failure to obey, subsequent exile and failure to inherit God's blessings is not going to stop him from accomplishing his plan. Even as Israel is being judged, God sends his prophets to her to explain why this disaster has come about and what will happen afterwards.

Through the prophets, God tells the people that he will provide a king from David's line who will, in fact, be God himself (Isaiah 9:6). This king will rule righteously and bring about an utterly amazing time of peace reminiscent of the time before the Fall (Genesis 3). Not only that, but God's king will rule forever (2 Samuel 7). However, when Israel is taken into captivity, it is not clear how this will happen.



#### For starters

1. What do you look for in a leader? Write a CV for your chosen leader.



#### Investigate

2. Read Ezekiel 34:1-10. What is God's complaint against the 'shepherds'?

What does God warn them he will do as a result of their actions?

3. Read Ezekiel 34:10-24. Who will be the new shepherd? List the ways in which he will shepherd the flock.



4. How will this rescue be like the original exodus from Egypt? (See study 5).
5. Read Ezekiel 34:23-30. What are the main things promised? How do they compare to what God promised Abraham in Genesis 12?
6. Summarise what you have learned from Ezekiel 34. Why can we have confidence that the promises of this chapter will be fulfilled?



### Thinking it through

7. What questions are left unanswered after this study?
8. Read John 10:11-18. To what extent does this answer the remaining questions?



### Home study: Ezekiel 36:16-38

1. Why has God decided to rescue Israel?
2. How is he going to change them? Why is this important?

## The God who will deal with rebellion

### Ezekiel 36:16-38

#### The story so far

God has made great promises to Abraham and his descendants including the creation of a great nation ruled by a great king who would rule as no king had done before. However, in Ezekiel's time the people are in captivity in Babylon. All seems lost. Yet God is still saying that he will fulfil his promises despite the apparent hopelessness of the situation.

In chapter 34 of Ezekiel, God promised to deal with Israel's bad leaders by replacing them and coming to shepherd his people himself. God also promised to rescue Israel from captivity and to destroy her enemies who want to prevent her from obtaining what God has promised.

In Ezekiel 36, God goes on to state how he will deal with the biggest problem – our rebellion against him.



#### For starters

1. Make a list of the main promises God has made so far.
2. What have you learned from the studies so far about how these promises will/will not be fulfilled?



#### Investigate

3. Read Ezekiel 36:16-23. What have Israel done wrong?
4. What have been the consequences of Israel's rebellion? What, according to God, is wrong with such rebellion?

Why does the final consequence (36:20-23) concern God so much?

5. Read Ezekiel 36:22-38. Why will God rescue Israel? In what way does this rebuke them and in what way is it an encouragement? How are God's priorities here different from ours?
6. List the 3 or 4 main elements of God's rescue (34:24-36). Compared to the original exodus (study 5), what will God do differently? Why is this important?
7. What is the difference between the promise in 36:25 and the promise in 36:26-27? Why are both needed?



### Thinking it through

8. What would the people of Israel be like when the promises of Ezekiel 36 were fulfilled and why was this important?
9. How would it feel to be forgiven of 'all your uncleanness' (v25)? How would it feel to walk in God's statutes and be obedient to God all the time (v27)?



### Home study: Isaiah 52:13-53:12

1. What does this passage tell us about the servant and what he will do?
2. According to the passage, why is this going to happen?

## The God who will send a suffering servant

### Isaiah 53

#### The story so far

In Ezekiel 36, God promised that he would deal with the problem that has dogged humanity since Genesis 3 and the Fall – namely our rebellion against him. God promised to cleanse his people from their past rebellion and give them a new heart so that they can obey him in the future (36:25-27) – something that has seemed impossible until this point. Furthermore, God gives one of the clearest explanations in the Bible of why he will rescue – not for their sake but for the sake of his name, his reputation, among the nations (36:22-23, 32, 36).

However, we are not yet clear on how God will do this. We know he will send a great king to rule and that this king will be God himself coming to rule. Furthermore, we know that God himself will come as a good shepherd to rescue his people and that he will forgive our past rebellion. But, as yet, we do not know how God will deal with people's past rebellion so that they can be forgiven without his own character being compromised. How can God justly forgive rebels? In Isaiah 53, God explains that he will do so by sending a suffering servant.



#### For starters

1. Imagine you were to carry out a street survey asking people, 'What is the world's biggest problem?' What answers do you think you would get?
  
2. In what different ways do people try and deal with such problems?



#### Investigate

3. Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12. What are the 3 or 4 main things the passage tells us about the servant?
  
4. Read Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:1-9a; 50:4-8. What are the main things that these passages add to our understanding of the servant?

42:1-7	
49:1-9a	
50:4-8	

5. According to Isaiah 53, in what ways does the servant suffer? What further suffering do we see in Isaiah 49:1-9a and 50:4-8?
6. According to 52:13 – 53:12, why does the servant suffer?
7. What happens to the servant after his suffering?



### Thinking it through

8. How is the problem of humanity's rebellion dealt with according to Isaiah 53?

9. How does this fit with the 'DVD swap' from week 3 of Christianity Explored?

10. How does this passage help us to know how to respond to Jesus?



### Home study: Luke 3-4

1. What is John the Baptist's job (3:4)? How does he do this?

2. List the ways that Jesus is described in these chapters. What aspect of Jesus' character does Luke focus on in 4:1-13?

## The God who fulfils his promises

### Luke 3-4

#### The story so far

Both God's good creation and God's chosen people, Israel, were ruined by the rebellion of mankind. God's response is to put right what has gone wrong. So far, this has involved God promising first to deal with the effects of rebellion (by more than reversing the effects of the Fall) and then to deal with rebellion itself. God will create a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21-22) and he will rescue his people from this fallen world to enjoy it by forgiving them and enabling them to obey him. However, these promises had not been fulfilled by the end of the Old Testament. The initial fulfilment of these promises in Israel was all lost when they were taken into captivity - the restoration of Jerusalem and its Temple after the return from captivity was a pale imitation of the former city and Temple. Now, after some 400 years of silence after the end of the Old Testament, all this changes as God begins to fulfil what he has promised. God does so through his Son, Jesus, who is contrasted both with Adam and Israel.



#### For starters

1. List the main promises God made in the Old Testament.
2. List what you have learned from the studies so far about how these promises are to be fulfilled.



#### Investigate

3. Read Luke 3:1-20. Why is it significant that John the Baptist's ministry is described in terms of Isaiah 40:3-5 (see Luke 3:4-6)? What does this teach us about what God is about to do, and what Jesus has come to do?
4. What is John doing in Luke 3:7-14? What is he teaching them about themselves? How will this prepare the way for Jesus?

5. What do the Jews mean when they call Abraham their father (Luke 3:8)? Why is John's response significant?
6. What is John doing in Luke 3:15-18? How will this prepare the way for Jesus? Why is it significant, given what we have seen in the studies so far, that Jesus will 'baptise with the Holy Spirit' (Luke 3:16, cf. Ezekiel 36)?
7. Read Luke 3:21 – 4:13. What is Jesus called in 3:21 – 4:13, and who else is called the same thing in these verses? What then is the significance of Jesus' behaviour in 4:1-13?
8. What is the main difference between Jesus' behaviour in Luke 4:1-13 and Israel's behaviour throughout the Old Testament? Why is the main difference between Jesus and both Adam and Israel so significant?



### Thinking it through

9. What does this passage teach about who Jesus is and what Jesus came to do?
10. How different is your answer now to what you thought before you studied The Big Picture? Do the differences matter? Why / why not?



### Home study: Hebrews 10:1-25

1. What is wrong with the Old Testament sacrifices? What is the solution?
2. How are Christians encouraged to respond? Why?



## The God whose Son is all we need!

### Hebrews 10:1-25

#### The story so far

Luke 3-4 demonstrated that Jesus is the long awaited rescuer. he is the true Son of God and he is able to resist temptation and to fully obey God. he has come to fulfil God's promises that were revealed throughout the Old Testament: to rescue his people, and forgive their rebellion and bring them to his new heaven and new earth.

However, the New Testament also demonstrates that, rather than stick with Jesus, God's people are often tempted to give up trusting in Jesus and his death as the fulfilment of all these promises. They are tempted to believe Jesus isn't quite enough – that while his death was helpful, more is required to bring about the fullness of all that God promised. Often this takes the form of believing that they need to continue trying to obey the demands of the deal with Moses in addition to following Christ.

The recipients of the letter to the Hebrews were tempted, probably because of persecution and pressure that was brought to bear, to return (or, possibly, to turn) to Judaism. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews, like all other New Testament writers, urges them to persevere in Jesus and the gospel.

The writer argues that through Jesus comes God's revelation of himself and his plan of salvation, and that Jesus has been chosen by God as the great "high priest", or intermediary, between God and his people. Jesus is revealed in Hebrews 7 as the eternal high priest and, in Hebrews 8-9, as the minister of the new covenant and ministry – far superior to the Old Testament system of animal sacrifices that he replaced. Jesus, unlike the Old Testament priests, entered heaven, set us free from sin, and inaugurated the new covenant (9:11-20). However, there was an even more significant difference.



#### For starters

1. Sum up the big picture of the Bible from the studies so far.



#### Investigate

2. Read Hebrews 10:1-25. Looking at v1-4, what was the old covenant law not able to do and why? What was the point of the law according to Hebrews 10:1-4? (i.e. What was it meant to teach us?)
3. What has replaced the sacrifices and offerings according to v5-10?
4. How does the writer show that Jesus' work is done (v11-14)? How does the Holy Spirit also show that Jesus' sacrifice is complete (v15-18)?

5. Sum up the main point of Hebrews 10:1-18. How do these verses (10:1-18) fit into what you have learned so far in the Big Picture course?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Re-read 10:19-25. How does it follow on from 10:1-18?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What are the two great benefits of Jesus' death? List what Christians are called to do in response. What do these mean? Are Christians given any other reasons for doing these things?



### Thinking it through

8. How would describe what Jesus came to do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. How would you summarise what the 'big picture' is?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Do you believe that Jesus really is all we need? What does it mean to live as someone who believes that?