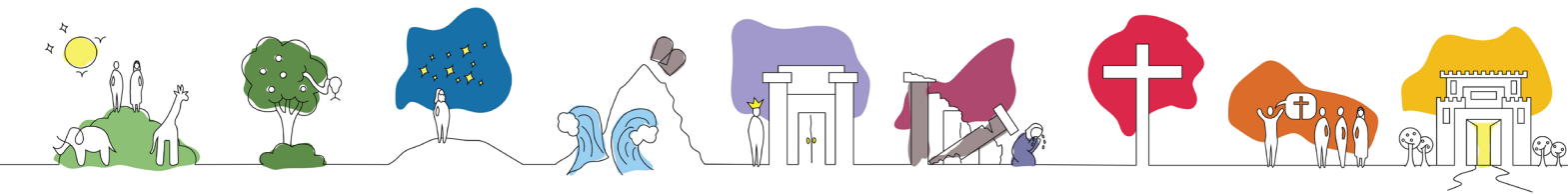


God's big story



ENGADINE &
HEATHCOTE
ANGLICAN

Growth Groups Studies Term 2 2020 Biblical Theology

God's Big Story

Biblical Theology Sermon Series

This term we are going to undertake the task of seeing how the whole bible flows in one big story. Understanding how the bible's story progressively unfolds and fits together is called Biblical Theology.

Instead of looking at all of the bible and finding out what the Bible says on one particular topic (a study called Systematic Theology), biblical theology looks at how a story, or a particular theme develops and unfolds throughout the entire sweep of the bible. It experiences the bible's story from 'ground level' and learns from what is going on in the passage that is in front of you at a given time.

Biblical theology then notices how different themes that are picked up throughout the bible's historical story arc, develop, expand, or are later filled with deeper significance as God's revelation continues through the bible.

This term we will follow God's story throughout the pages of the bible, learning who God is, how he relates to his people, and the extents he will go to in order to bring God's people together in God's place under his rule and blessing.

Our study will take us from God's good creation (the garden) to God's wonderful promised New creation (the heavenly city)... and help us see that Jesus' death and resurrection to reconcile all people back to God was his plan and purpose from the very beginning of time.

Each and every step of the way we will see God's amazing goodness, his faithfulness and his amazing acts of salvation. Hopefully this will help us see how we stand truly blessed now, as we await the wonderful time of Jesus' return.

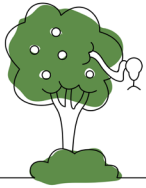
Term 2 Memory Verse

"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God." **2 Corinthians 1:20**



Week 1. The Pattern of the Kingdom

Sunday the 3rd of May



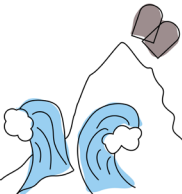
Week 2. The Perished Kingdom

Sunday the 10th of May



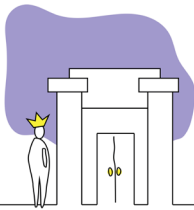
Week 3. The Promised Kingdom

Sunday the 17th of May



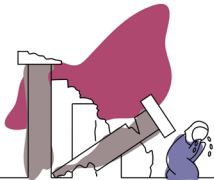
Week 4. The Partial Kingdom (People / Blessing)

Sunday the 24th of May



Week 5. The Partial Kingdom (Land / King)

Sunday the 31st of May



Week 6. The Prophesied Kingdom

Sunday the 7th of June



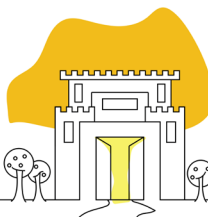
Week 7. The Present Kingdom

Sunday the 14th of June



Week 8. The Proclaimed Kingdom

Sunday the 21st of June

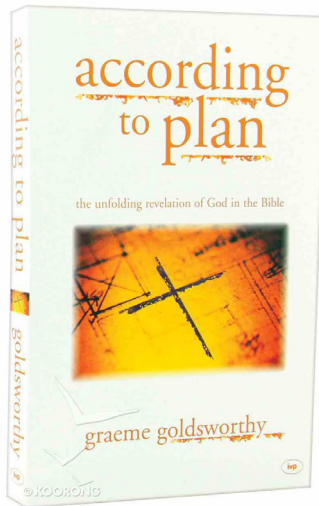


Week 9. The Perfected Kingdom

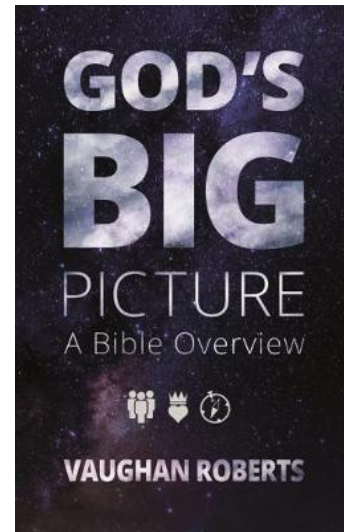
Sunday the 28th of June

Resources

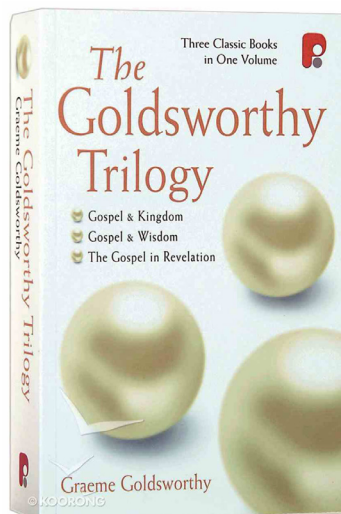
The following are some brilliant books to be reading along side the sermon series...



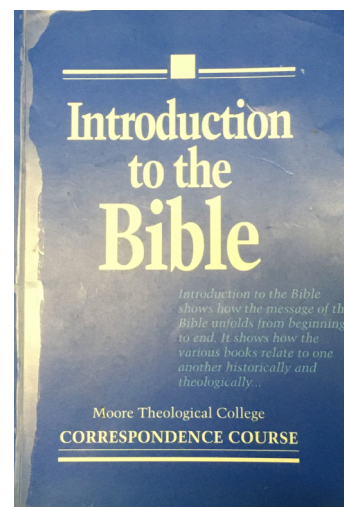
**According to Plan:
The Unfolding Revelation of
God in the Bible**
Graeme Goldsworthy (1991)



God's Big Picture
Vaughan Roberts (2012)



**The Goldsworthy Trilogy:
Gospel and Kingdom, Gospel
and Wisdom, the Gospel in
Revelation.**
Graeme Goldsworthy (2002)



Introduction to the Bible
Moore College
Correspondance course
Preliminary Theological
Certificate

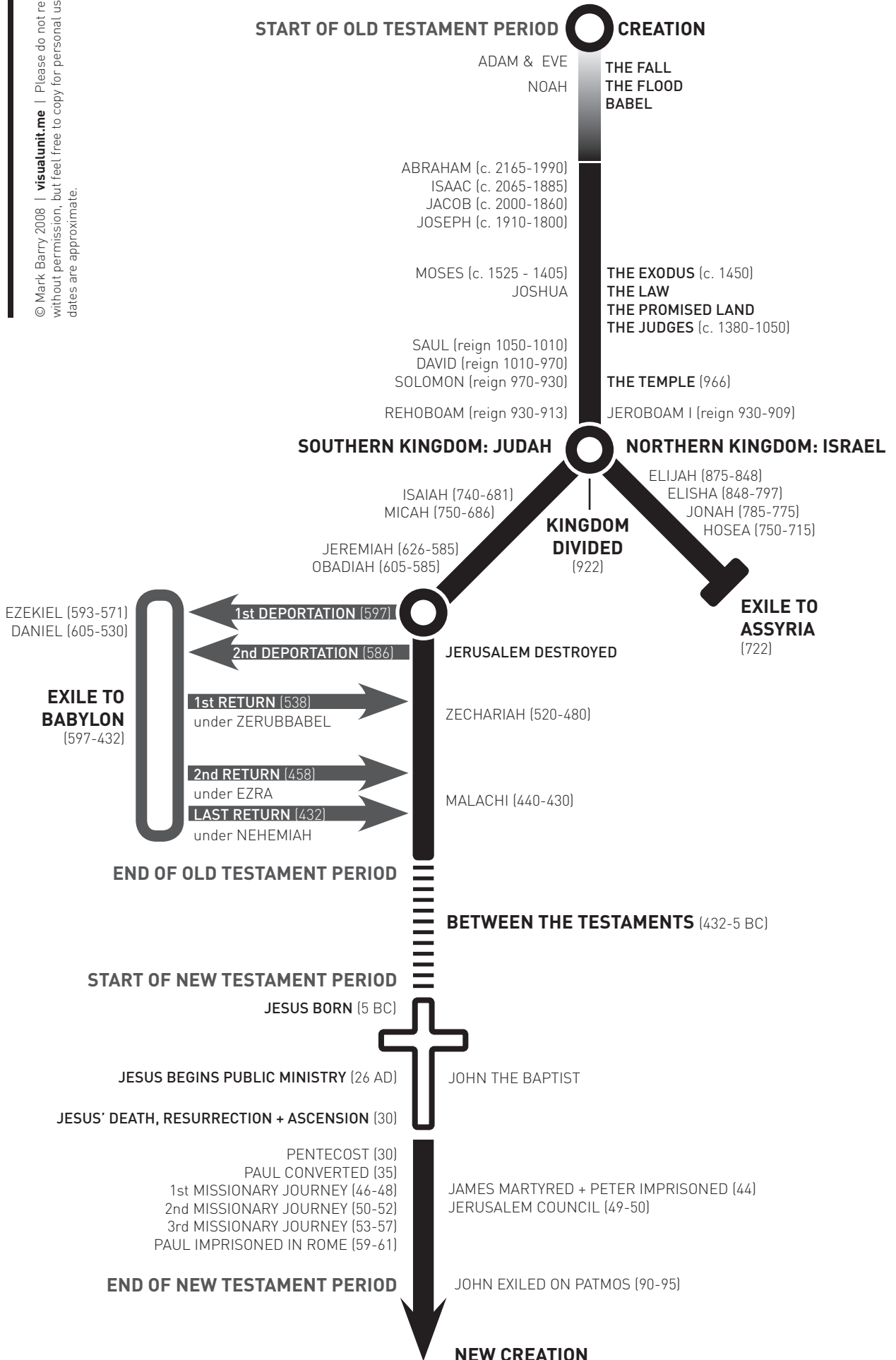
Websites.

www.visualunit.me
bibleproject.com

Helpful resources for the visually minded produced by Mark Barry.
Excellent videos to fill in the gaps along the way.

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Resources

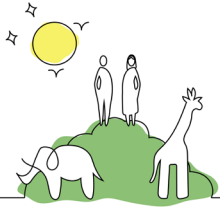


TRAVELLING THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT

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*The order of the prophets are approximate, as some of the books are not dated.





Week 1. The Pattern of the Kingdom

To begin...

What excites / daunts you about thinking through the whole story of the bible?

What comes to mind when you think of the word "kingdom?"

Read Genesis 1:1-2:3

What are the repeated patterns, words and phrases?

And God said. Let there be. God called the... And it was so.
Evening, Morning - 1st day (etc) God saw that it was good.

What do these patterns tell us about God?

God's words is powerful.
God is a good creator. His works are good.
This creation account is ordered and not chaos.

What do these verses tell us about God's creation?

It is good!
Everything was made purposefully.
All encompassing - all the heavens and all the earth. He controls it all.

What are we told about human beings?

Made in God's image. (God is described as 'us' in verse 26.)
They were made to be in God's image. Interesting to ponder what it means to be in God's image. Not physical appearance, but a place to rule, have good, loving, authority over.

Why do humans have a special plan in God's plans?

They are set as different from all other aspects of creation. (1:28-30)
They are to rule, and subdue creation. To increase and multiply. God gives them a purpose and direction, different from all the rest of creation. Specifically made in God's image.

What made the 7th day different from days 1 - 6?

Read Genesis 2:4-25

What is the relationship between:

- God and humans?

God gives mankind a specific job to do (2:15-16). He gives freedom and appropriate restriction (17). God wants only what is best, so when man is alone, woman is made.

- Man and woman?

Eve is made as a helper. Individually Adam cannot do what God has planned, but both Adam and Eve together are able to achieve God's plan for creation.

Eve is no less than Adam because she is described as helper. Together they can achieve God's plan, individually they cannot.

- Human beings and creation?

Work, and take care of.

Mankind has a specific stewardship over God's creation. They are part of creation, but rule over it under God.

Read and compare John 1:1-5 and Colossians 1:15-17. How does Jesus' role relate to Genesis 1 and 2?

These passages help us understand God the Son's role in creation. This is a "Christological" approach. They do not negate Genesis 1, but rather give a fuller picture of God as trinity. God creates by speaking, and in John 1, John describes Jesus as the word who creates.

Colossians also emphasises, creation was also made 'for' the Son. In Jesus we clearly see God.

What do these chapters NOT tell us about the story of creation?

What DO these chapters tell us?

Important to note that this is not a scientific textbook, although some may want it to be. That was not its purpose. It is presented as God's orderly account of creation... to explain God's plan for creation and also his rulership over all.

Reflection

How does the teaching of Genesis 1-2 differ to worldviews in our society?

How does it challenge your thinking and behaviour?

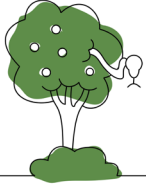
When do you need to remember that:

- material things are valuable to God?
- people are made in God's image and are precious?
- rest with God (not work or things or people) is the goal of creation?

What could you do this week to enjoy God as the creator and enjoy rest with him? (Not specifically go for a walk... but more along the lines of ponder and delight in him.)

Prayer

- Insights from Studying “God’s Big Story.” That we would see the tremendous blessing we have to be included in God’s eternal blessing because of Jesus.
- Sunday gatherings - Online at 9am and 6pm... but usually...Engadine (9am, 10:45am, 6pm), Heathcote (9:30am)
- Growth groups – our engine room of relationship in COVID times.
- Church staff team
 - James & Di Warren, Josh, Ben, Emma
 - 9am + 1045am Engadine, Oversight
 - Michael & Christina Dodd, Luke, Audrey, Ben
 - Night Church, Heathcote, MTS (“Send out”)
 - Ian & Megan Morrison, Jade, Timothy, Luke
 - Kids + Families, Local outreach
 - Dan & Shannon Bishop, Zeke, Jed, Abi
 - Youth + Leaders
 - Angus & Olivia Martin, Ted, Annabel
 - 2nd year Moore College
 - Marg & Phil Chapman, Elise, Sophie, Dale
 - Office
 - Michelle & Mal Mellows, Rachael, Bec, Daniel
 - SRE, Office



Week 2. The Perished Kingdom

To begin...

What comes to mind when you think of the word "sin?"

What is our world's attitude to sin?

Read Genesis 3

Satan is the "deceiver" (eg John 8:44; Revelation 12:9), as he manipulates the truth. How does Satan deceive the woman and man?

The serpent here negates that what God said is good and trustworthy. He lies, and seemingly his lies are attractive.

He presents them a reality where they determine what is good apart from God.

What did God actually say to the woman and man about the tree(s)?

What did Adam and Eve each do wrong?

Discuss: "God knew good and evil. Adam and Eve then decided they wanted to know for themselves, because they didn't trust God's knowledge of good and evil." Do you agree?

How is Adam and Eve's rebellion typical of all sin?

At the base level, it is not trusting that what God has said is good and true.

When we sin, we decide to ignore God's goodness and his appropriate lordship, and establish ourselves as our own "lords."

Fill in the table below to see how sin has damaged relationships and to see how God's created order is now different...

Relationship	Pre Fall	Post Fall
God and Humans		
Man and Woman		
Human beings and creation		

Reflection

What part do we play in Genesis 3:1-7? Are we responsible for sin, or was it just passed down to us?

It is important to note that even though we are born into sin, it is still something that we actively decide to participate in. It is not something that we can only blame Adam for as we still individually ignore God's lordship and seek to establish our own.

How do the curses that were handed down introduce us to the work of Jesus? (Read Romans 5:12-21 for further clarification.)

How do we see Satan using the same tactics today?

What signs of hope can be seen in this chapter?

Despite Adam and Eve's rebellion, God provided (vv21)

There is also a curse upon the Serpent... with the curse implying that one would come to crush the Serpents head. (v15)

How can we be encouraged by this hope?

Sin did not end God's plan for creation or his relationship with his people... God would still work to care for his people.

Prayer

- That we would be people who are aware and constantly repenting of our sin. That we would be people who are always incredibly thankful of the grace and forgiveness we have been shown in Jesus.

COVID - 19 Prayer points

- Pray for healing of those who are suffering the effects of the fall in sickness and pain now.
- Please pray that as many people feel the hurt of the virus, they this would cause them to seek the ultimate healing that comes from Jesus and him alone.
- Please pray for those who are doing research into an anti - virus, that their work would be fruitful and speedy.
- Please pray for those who are in leadership of us, especially our Prime Minister (Scott Morrison) and our Premier (Gladys Berejiklian) that they would make good decisions about the health, safety and wellbeing of those in our country and state.
- Please pray for our church community. Many are hurting because of this virus in many ways. Please pray that we would find comfort in God's faithfulness and his grace. Please pray for those who have lost jobs, fighting economic hardship etc.
- Please pray for good relationships with our neighbours that might lead into further gospel conversations.
- Please pray people would take invitations to church, be it online, or in person when we are able to meet again.



Week 3. The Promised Kingdom

To begin...

If you were asked by a work colleague "What is wrong with this world?", how would you answer?

Quickly flick through Genesis 4-11. What are some of the events that occur in these chapters?

How universal is the effect of sin we learnt about in Genesis 3? (Eg: See Genesis 6:5-6)

Read Genesis 12:1-9

What does God promise Abram in these verses?

Compare Genesis 11:4 with Genesis 12:2. What do these verses tell us about humanity and God?

Where mankind tries to make a name for themselves and is thwarted, God will make a name for Abraham, that will never be thwarted. Where mankind fails... God will succeed.

How do Gods promises to Abraham reflect a return to the good creation of Genesis 1-2?

Where mankind tries to make a name for themselves and is thwarted, God will make a name for Abraham, that will never be thwarted. Where mankind fails... God will succeed.

Read Genesis 15:1-6

In these verses God repeats his promises to Abram. What new things do we discover about God and Abram?

God gives a number (if indeed that is possible) to how big Abram's family will be. Abram's response is also note. one of tremendous faith. (Hebrews 11 picks that up)

Genesis 15:6 describes Abraham's response to God's promises. Put it in your own words.

Read Genesis 17:1-8

What is a covenant? (v2, 3, 7) God confirms his covenant by repeating his promises. List them under these headings:

People -

Land -

Blessing -

Reflection

What would have been hard for Abraham?

Read Galatians 3:6-9. 16, 29

How is God's promise to Abraham fulfilled in Jesus?

Read Hebrews 11:8-16

How is Abraham's response of faith to God's promises a model to us?

We, like Abraham, are saved by trust in God's promises. When is it hard for us to believe God's gospel promises of salvation?

Amongst other answers... When we rely upon our own action and not God's saving action. ie: when we forget that God has made promises and will bring them to be.

Why should it be easier for us to have faith in God than Abraham?

Prayer

- Kid's Ministry

For all those who dedicate themselves to discipling our youngest members, both in weekly leadership and on rosters.

- Primary: Sunday Kid Churches (Engadine 9 & 1045, Heathcote), Friday Kids Plus (Engadine & Heathcote), Tuesday GFS (girls), Thursday Gorillas (boys)
- Preschool: Sundays, Thursday Playtime, Friday Mini-music

Reach out

- For everyone in 2233 to hear and accept the good news about Jesus (pray for your street specifically).
- To train & send our best young leaders into the world through MTS (Ministry Training Strategy).
- Our diocese - Archbishop Glenn Davies, Moore College, Youthworks College
- Missions (beach/urban/rural), CMS, BCA.
- Welfare (Anglicare, Anglican Aid, Mission Australia, Hammond Care, all the vulnerable & poor of our society)

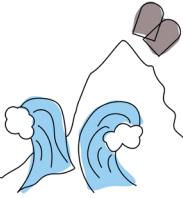
Link Missionaries

KAREN

- Serving God in the middle east.

MAL & CHARISSA FORREST

- Serving God in the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, a strategic location for evangelical ministry, both nationally and internationally.



Week 4. The Partial Kingdom (People / Blessing)

To begin...

Do you think Christian Churches should have the "Ten Commandments" up on their walls? Why or why not?

Background

A lot has happened between Genesis 12 and Exodus 20. So here is a quick run down.

Genesis 21 – God's promise is kept to Abraham and Sarah has a son named Isaac.

Genesis 25 -37 – Isaac has 2 Sons: Jacob and Esau. Jacob was the eldest and in line to receive God's promises, but Isaac is tricked and ends up passing his blessing onto Jacob. Jacob's family grows as he has 12 sons. God changes his name from Jacob to Israel (Genesis 32) and his son's names become the basis of the tribes of Israel.

Genesis 37-50 – Israel's family is saved from famine by God working through the situation that his son Joseph was placed in. Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt, yet went from slave to ruler over Egypt (2nd only to Pharaoh). Israel's family was brought safely to Egypt, they were spared from famine and survived.

Exodus 1 – Israel's family were blessed whilst in Egypt and became so numerous that the land was filled with them (1:7) A new King enslaved them and ordered all the Hebrew male babies to be killed. But despite that order, God blessed his people and they became even more numerous. 1:20)

Read Exodus 1:6-11

What parts of Gods promises to Abraham do you see being fulfilled at the start of Exodus?

Exodus 2-14 – God raised up Moses and used him to help rescue his people from Egypt. God shows his might and power by sending plagues on Egypt, culminating in the death of the first born son (the Passover 11:29). God's people exit (Exodus) Egypt and triumph over them as they pass through the Red Sea. God's people are saved and the armies of Egypt are

defeated. God takes his people from poverty to riches and slavery to freedom.

Exodus 15-18 – God provides for his people as they are in the wilderness, and God brings them to the foot of Mount Sinai, where the action occurs in Exodus 19-20.

In this sweep of chapters.... How do we continue to see God's faithfulness for his people Israel?

Read Exodus 19:1-8

What is the existing relationship between God and Israel?

God has remained faithful to his promises made to Abraham's family. At this point in time, they are his chosen people out of all the nations of the world.

What does God promise to do for his people?

What role does God want the Israelites to play in the world?

A priest is a go between... Israel (as a nation) is to become that for the world. They are to go between God and the world.

In this context, why would God's people need to know and keep God's law?

How does this relate to God's promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3?

God's plan is for all nations to be blessed. Israel would play a huge part in this.

Read Exodus 20:1-17

Group the commandments into the following categories...

Love God	Love Neighbour

Why should Israel keep God's law? Why do the commandments begin as they do (v1-3)?

The obedience of God's people never comes before God's saving action. God has called his people to obedience not in order to achieve salvation, but because God has already won it for them.

Should obedience be a pleasure or a burden to God's people?
(Exodus 20:2, Psalm 19:7-11)

What will obedience look like in practice for God's people?

Flesh out what this would look like ideally for God's people. Does it remind you of anyone? Also, does it remind you of a time to come?

Reflection

How does God's law reveal:

Our sin? (Further reading Romans 7:7-12)

We are made aware of our sin by having the law illuminate where we fail to honour God.

God's standards?

God shows us the need to love him completely.

(Once again - sin is made clear when we chose to love ourselves and our own desires above what we know to be his good desires.)

Our Saviour?

It certainly reveals our inability to save ourselves and therefore our need for a saviour.

It also shows that our saviour will be someone who is able to live in perfect relationship with God... something that no mere fallen member of mankind is able to do.

How does the gospel of Jesus Christ help reveal our sin, God's standards, our Saviour and our purpose? (Ephesians 2:1-10, 1 Peter 2:9-10)

Prayer

- Anchor Youth
(Friday nights; Sunday mornings Juniors; Sunday afternoon Seniors)
- Schools
 - SRE Primary Schools (Engadine, Engadine West, Marton, Heathcote, Heathcote East, Yarrawarra, Waterfall) and SRE High Schools (Engadine & Heathcote); Michelle Mellows overseeing
 - Lunchtime Christian groups (Engadine High) Shire Christian School
 - Generate (oversees paid chaplains & Scripture teachers)
 - Connection with Bosco students

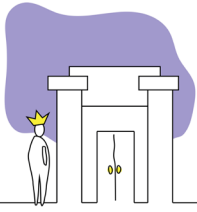
Link Missionaries

WAYNE OLDFIELD & MANDY JONES

- Serving God at Nungalinya College in Darwin, which trains Indigenous men and women for Christian discipleship and community leadership

KURT & BEC LANGMEAD

- Serving God through the BCA in Lightning Ridge, NSW



Week 5. The Partial Kingdom (Land / King)

To begin...

A friend asks you, "What is the old Testament all about...," what would you say?

Background

Once again, a lot has happened between Exodus 20 and 2 Samuel 7. So here is a quick run down.

Exodus 21-40 – God instructs his people more about the covenant he has with them. A large section is taken up with the building of the tabernacle – the tent where God will dwell with his people.

Leviticus – Deuteronomy – God's people fail to trust God as they were about to enter into the promised land. As a result, they were made wander in the desert for 40 years, and many of that generation, including Moses were not allowed to enter the land (Numbers 32:13). God renews his promises with his people and they are reminded of God's faithfulness and their responsibility as they enter the promised land.

Joshua – The book of Joshua is all about God's conquest of the Land God had promised them. Time after time, God showed that he won the battles for his people, and they were called to trust and obey him. The book culminates with the land being divided between the tribes God's people and God's covenant being renewed with his people. The people responded... "We will serve the Lord our God and obey him." (Joshua 24:24)

Judges – The book of Judges describes what happens after Joshua died. Even though God's people promised to be faithful to God and his covenant, time and time again the people failed to serve God and obey him, and were unfaithful to God's covenant.

As a result, there was a time of continual unrest between God's people and their neighbours (who were incredibly unhappy about God's people occupying their land). A cycle occurred over and over where the people sinned against God. After a while, God's people saw the error of their ways and God raised up a Saviour (a Judge) who rescued his people and brought a time of peace again.

However this cycle continued over and over until at the end of the book of Judges, with the sad climax:

"In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit."
(Judges 21:25)

1 and 2 Samuel – in Term 4 2019, we looked at the rise of kingship in Israel. Even though the people should have clearly realised that the Lord should have been their King (as Samuel told them over and over), they cried out for a king like the other nations. God gave them that King – Saul: a head taller than everyone else, a king like the other nations.

As Saul failed to obey God, God raised up a king after his own heart... he raised up David. The rest of 1 Samuel is about Saul's demise and the increase of David's throne.

2 Samuel sees David installed as king conquer Jerusalem, where God's people enjoy some peace under David's godly kingship.

Throughout all this time, God had 'dwelt' with his people in the tabernacle, made possible by the sacrificial system.

That leads us to today's passage...

Read 2 Samuel 7:1-29

Although not specifically stated, what does David have in mind to do in verses 1-3?

David planned to build a permanent house for God.

What is your response to this plan: is it a good idea or a bad idea?

What is God's initial response to David's plan and what does this reveal about God's character?

God is not concerned for what his people can achieve for them, (eg: build a house) but what he can do for his people.

god is the God of all creation... how funny an idea it is for him to be confined in a building.

God has his own "building" plans:

- What does God promise for the nation of Israel? (v10-11)
- What does God promise for David and his family? (v9, 12-16, 27)
- What does God promise concerning the coming king? (v13)

- How does Jesus fulfill these promises?
(Matthew 1:1, Mark 12:35-37 , John 2:18-22 , Romans 1:1-4)

What similarities and differences can you see between these promises and the earlier promises to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3)?

From verses 18-29 , what sort of response does God's grace evoke in David?

A response of appropriate humility.

Reflection

David's prayer response in verses 18-29 is beautifully humble. How can God's promises to us (including NT promises) shape our prayer for our...

Homes?

Church?

World?

Ourselves?

For further reading...

Read these passages and see how formative 2 Samuel 7 is for the rest of the Bible's story.

Psalms 89, 110, 132
Ezekiel 34, 37
Revelation 5:5

Isaiah 9, 11
Matthew 1, 2

Jeremiah 23, 33
2 Timothy 2:8

Prayer

- Seniors Ministry

Praise God for the many godly older saints in our church family who model daily, costly obedience to Jesus.

Pray for our seniors to retire and age well, continuing to serve Jesus with each new stage of life.

- As parents, grand-parents, aunts, uncles (biologically and spiritually)
- Ministry in Aged Care Facilities (St Vincent's Care Services aka John Paul Village, Moran, Garrawarra)
- Prime Time
- Myriad of interpersonal acts of kindness and support

Between weeks 5 and 6...

Background

David's kingdom and his son Solomon's kingdom were both high points and low points for God's people. Their kingdom's are a great reminder about the sinfulness of man and our great need for salvation. David's kingship was a model for the kingship of Israel, however even though David was God's king, he was still deeply flawed. (Read 2 Samuel 11 and 12 to get an example.)

Solomon became king after David's death, and built the physical temple for God's people in Jerusalem. During Solomon's reign, Israel experienced somewhat unrivaled peace and prosperity. God gave Solomon wisdom that surpassed all others and the nations flocked to marvel at the splendor of God's people and God's king. It seems as though God's promises to Abraham's family had been fulfilled. However sadly, whatever goes up... must come down (especially for King Solomon). Even though Solomon experienced unrivaled prosperity, he typified the unfaithfulness of God's people to God during this time. In spite of the fact that God had spoken to him in person and given him so much... Solomon chose a path of unfaithfulness to God's covenant. That was a horrible decision for the leader of God's people. He hoarded wealth. He acquired chariots. He put confidence in his own might above God's. Not only that, but Solomon was prolific in marriage. His foreign wives turned his heart away from the Lord (1 Kings 11:1-5) so much so that the writer of 1 Kings comments that *"Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done."* (1 Kings 11:6)

The aftermath of Solomon's kingship brought a catastrophe upon God's nation. His son's Jeroboam and Rehoboam divided the nation into North and South under their own kingships. The North retained the name of Israel under Jeroboam's kingship and the south was known as Judah under Rehoboam's kingship. So bad was the feud between the 2 kings that Jeroboam set up a new altar at Dan and Bethel (in the north - Israel) so that the people could worship God there and not in God's temple in Jerusalem. The kings of Jeroboam's kingdom (Israel) were all horrid, and turned away from worshiping the lord and worshiped other gods.

Rehoboam's southern Kingdom (Judah) was a little better. Amidst bad kings, Judah had some wonderful kings (like Josiah) who loved the Lord. As God was faithful to his promises, Judah maintained a descendant from David's family in kingship over his people.

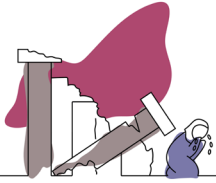
During this time, God sent many prophets to warn his people about the consequences of turning away from his covenants. (Elijah and Elisha take up a majority of the accounts in 1 and 2 Kings.)

God repeatedly said through his prophets that if God's people were to repent from their evil ways and return to him, God would be loving and forgiving, and judgement would not come upon them.

Much of this time is written about in the books of 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles, the major prophets and the minor prophets, (quite a large section of the bible). It is therefore very important to know the setting and intended audience (be it Israel or Judah, or both) when reading through this literature.

These books of history and prophecy give reason for the fall of the northern kingdom (Israel) to Assyria in 722 BC and the southern Kingdom (Judah) to Babylon in 586 BC. As Babylonian empire came in and laid siege to Jerusalem, the temple was destroyed and many of God's people were taken into exile in Babylon as punishment.

We will spend some time in study 6 looking at the start of the book of Hosea. Hosea was a prophet who spoke to the northern kingdom of Israel. Hosea's message was one of destruction that would come upon God's people because of their disobedience. Yet despite that ominous description, Hosea also carried a wonderful promise of restoration. It gives us great insight into God's relationship with his people. It also shows God's amazing faithfulness to his covenant promise, despite the continual unfaithfulness of his people towards God.



Week 6. The Prophesied Kingdom

To begin...

Why can it be easy for us to forget about God?

Think about your own experiences in life.

Do you tend to forget about God when things are going well, or when things are going poorly? Why is that?

Read 2 Kings 14:23-29

How would you describe Jeroboam's (not Solomon's son) reign as king?

Read Hosea 1:1-2:1.

What reason does God give for Hosea's unusual choice of marriage partner?

Hosea's marriage is to become an embodiment of the relationship between God and his people. (v2)

Forsaking the Lord is described as spiritual adultery. Why do we rarely think of Sin this way?

Perhaps because we don't see our relationship with God being as close as a marriage. Therefore we don't see sin as serious as it is. We minimise sin's seriousness.

How do the names of Gomer's children help us to understand what has happened to the relationship between God and his people?

The Israelites (the north) were so far gone that God would no longer be their God. (v9) Yet despite this... there are still promises of God's faithfulness (1:10-2:1) and reversal.

Read Hosea 2:2-13

How will God respond to his people's unfaithfulness?

God will respond in Judgement. He will take away, block the path, wall her in.

Although confronting, how is this an expression of God's love?

God knows that that unfaithfulness isn't for her good, so it is good to remove that. God wants to lead her back to the realisation found in verse 7. God simply can't allow them to forget him.

Read Hosea 2:14-23

What is surprising about God's response to his people's unfaithfulness?

God's ultimate purpose is love and reconciliation. God's action is very one-sided despite God's people's continued unfaithfulness.

Read Hosea 3

How does what takes place in Hosea 3 further add to our picture of God's covenant relationship with his people?

It reminds us what God's people are like and what God is like. We continually wander, but God continues to act towards us in faithful, gracious and sacrificial love.

Reflection

What hope is presented for the future of God's people? (look for echoes of the promises to Abraham and David)

Although there will be discipline for God's people because of their actions and decisions, there will be no divorce.

1:10-11 are helpful. God's children won't be able to be counted... and they will have 1 leader!

What do we learn about God from these chapters in Hosea? In turn, what do we learn about ourselves?

How wonderful and faithful God is and how deeply sinful and wayward we are.

How does understanding the depth of our unfaithfulness towards God help us appreciate the work of God shown in Jesus?

Prayer

Spend time reflecting on the depth of our sin before confessing the deep sorrow and disappointment of the ways we depart from God.

Praise God for his incredible faithfulness and love towards us.

Ask God to fill you with awe, joy and thankfulness for sending Jesus to bring us back into relationship.

Between weeks 6 and 7...

Background

A lot happens between the exile to Babylon and the coming of Jesus. In fact, between the start of the exile and Jesus' birth, 600 years elapse. God's people (the southern nation of Judah) were carried off into Exile in Babylon in 597BC. This was part of God's judgement upon his people for their unfaithfulness to him and his covenant. The book of Daniel gives us amazing insight into the way God was working through some of his people whilst they were in exile in Babylon. We will be able to delight in this a little more as we look at Daniel in Term 3 this year.

During the Exile, it seems as though all of God's promises had unravelled. God's people were no longer in God's Land and they were certainly not experiencing his blessing as they were in captivity in a foreign country. However, despite the obvious judgement God's people were experiencing, God was still faithful to his people, and after a time, was going to restore his people back to the land he had taken away from them. The book of Ezekiel shows us that even though the people had departed from the land, God's glory remained with them throughout this time.

The Babylonian empire came to an end in 539BC at the hands of King Cyrus the Great (of Persia) under God's sovereignty. At that time Cyrus proclaimed that God had given him the kingdoms he had, and God had appointed him to build (rebuild) the temple at Jerusalem. (Ezra 1) God's people in Exile then returned to the land and went about the task of rebuilding the temple and the city of Jerusalem under the approval of King Cyrus. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah record this happening. Upon the completion of the foundation temple there was much rejoicing in the city. Many shouted great praise to God for his goodness. But in a tragic statement of reality, not all rejoiced. Ezra 3 captures the moment beautifully.

¹⁰ When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the LORD, as prescribed by David king of Israel. ¹¹ With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: "He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever."

And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. ¹² But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while

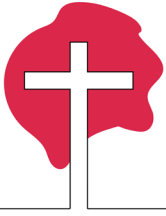
many others shouted for joy. ¹³ No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away. (Ezra 3:10-13)

God's people were in the land once more, but the blessing and prosperity that they enjoyed were only a pale shadow of what had been promised to God's people. Expectation was high. God's people were looking forward to a time where the blessing promised to Abraham would benefit the whole earth.

God had promised his people through the prophets a time coming where there would be a new covenant between God and his people, where God's law would be put on his people's hearts and minds and each of God's people from the least to the greatest would know God. In this covenant, God would forgive his people's wickedness and remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

God had promised also that a new king would come from David's line who would be anointed with the Spirit of God and would rule with the wisdom and righteousness of God (Isaiah 11:1-5). He would also be a servant who would draw all nations to himself so that God's salvation would reach the ends of the earth. (Isaiah 49:6) Not only that, the restoration of Jerusalem would lead to a time where the God's people in God's land under his rule would be reminiscent of a new creation. (Isaiah 65:17-25) In this complete restoration by God's king, the sound of weeping and crying would be heard no more and the people would be blessed by God. This was far from what the people experienced in Ezra's time.

After God's people were back in the land and the prophets had spoken, there was a time of silence for 400 years in between the Old and New Testaments. Therefore, expectations of this coming time of worldwide blessing coming from God's people were still incredibly high (perhaps even higher now that the Romans were occupying Israel). When would this King (Messiah) come? Who would this Messiah be? How would he bring this new covenant and amazing blessing? Luke gives us a glimpse at the beginning of his gospel



Week 7. The Present Kingdom

To begin...

What extent would you go to, to save someone you loved?

If you were God, how would you bring salvation to all mankind?

Read Luke 1:5-25. (Miracle baby 1)

God broke his silence to his people through a message to Zechariah. What is the great significance about Zechariah's son?

v16-17. He will prepare people and turn their hearts towards God. But also... he will make a people ready for the Lord.

Read Luke 1:26-38 and 46-50. (Miracle baby 2)

Who is Mary's son described as being?

Son of the most high. (32) David's throne. (32) His rule will be eternal. (33)
All will call Mary blessed because of her involvement in God's plan of salvation.

In what ways will Mary's son fulfill the promises God had made to his covenant people (eg Genesis 12:1-3 and 2 Samuel 7)

Read Luke 1:67-79

Why does Zechariah praise God?

God has raised up his Saviour who will rescue and redeem his people. (68)
God has kept his promises.

What do we learn about the salvation Mary's son will bring?

People will be made known of salvation that comes by forgiveness of sin.

Read Romans 5:1-11

Notice all the past tenses in these verses. How did Mary's child (Jesus) bring salvation? What do we experience "now", and what is "not yet"?

Jesus has already done it all for us. Past tense. v10 talks of the victory won in the resurrection and reminds us of the promise of salvation to come on the last day.

Reflect

Like Zechariah, praise God for the wonder of being saved through Mary's son, God's promised King.

Prayer

• Church Leadership

Praise God for the many wonderful servants who serve our church faithfully in so many different ways.

Please pray for our Church wardens...

Barry Watson, Ian Campbell and Geoff Summers.

Please pray for our Parish Councilors

Lyn Lawless, Pat Coffey, Edwina Hine, John Orr, Erem Kidson, Stephen Thode and Phil Alterator.

Please pray for our Parish Nominators

Jackie Coffey, Brad Lewis, Jim Morgan, Vanessa Thode, Stephen Mitchell.

Please pray for our Synod Reps

Edwina Hine, Geoff Summers



Week 8. The Proclaimed Kingdom

To begin...

If you knew with certainty that Jesus was going to return in

- 100 years,
- 1 year,
- 1 day,

how would your life change?

“Christians can’t help but speak of Jesus.”: Discuss.

Background

Over the last months we have seen how God’s promises to his people speak of a great time, where God’s people will live in God’s place under his rule and blessing. Last week we were able to see how Jesus came as the fulfillment of those promises. He came to abolish the hold that sin had over us and defeat death so that we might be able to experience a wonderful relationship with God once more.

As Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, he promised that he would return. As those who have faith in Jesus, we joyously await his return, knowing that we will experience forgiveness and blessing with God for eternity in the resurrection on that day.

After Jesus’ resurrection the disciples were given the Holy Spirit. They were changed from a timid bunch of followers into a spirit empowered proclaiming band of brothers. As the Spirit came upon them at Pentecost, they began to proclaim the Kingdom of God and Jesus the resurrected King. As the disciples did this: They were Jesus’ witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

We live 2000 years after the resurrection as those who have been blessed by the gospel of Jesus Christ going out to the ends of the earth. As we live 2000 years after Jesus’ resurrection we also, like the disciples, still eagerly await his return.

However, as we await we are reminded (from what we learnt looking at eschatology in Term 3 2019) that we live in the overlap of the ages. We live in the time where God’s kingdom has come in Jesus, but has not been consummated completely. This is something we are looking forward to on the day he returns.

We are raised with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly realms as we await knowing that he will show us the incomparable riches of his grace in the future. (Ephesians 2:6-7)

Well then... if that day is coming... why the delay?

To answer, simply... all those who will know Jesus kingship, haven't come to a knowledge of Jesus' kingship yet. Jesus has made it clear to us that we are therefore in a time of gospel proclamation to the nations, to the entire world. Thankfully this is not a task we do ourselves. Just as the disciples were Spirit empowered, Jesus has given believers the Spirit in order to equip them to build up the church and proclaim the gospel and to remain faithful to him until we experience the final resurrection.

Paul speaks of this ministry / this service we have in light of our future hope in 2 Corinthians 4.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

When are we tempted to use 'shameful ways' or 'distort the word of God' in evangelism?

Note people's personal response and acknowledge the felt challenges.

What can we learn from Paul's example?

Learn that it is God's work of salvation in people.

What response should we expect when we speak of Jesus?

- What can make the job difficult?

People will have blinded minds. We do not know who God will save. Some will be perishing.

- What encouragements are we given?

God has worked in the hearts of Paul and others. For the God who created the world... nothing is beyond him.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-12

In what sense are we "jars of clay"?

We are weak and unimpressive. But the message we carry is not!

To what extent do v8-12 reflect your experience of evangelism?

Why has God allowed us to be weak?

To show his amazing power.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:13-18

What do these verses tell us about what we can expect now, in this present age?

We have victory now, but it will be fully seen when Jesus returns in the future. We may experience trouble now... but that pales into insignificance in comparison to our future.

What will we receive in the age to come?

Reflect

What are you looking forward to about Jesus' return? How can you fix your eyes on what is eternal?

As a "jar of clay" this week, can how can you help someone see the light of the gospel?

Prayer

- Wisdom with money

- Pray for wisdom in how we use the money God has entrusted to us, supporting our church, CMS, BCA and through daily acts of kindness (like hospitality).

Thank you for all those who contribute financially to our church .

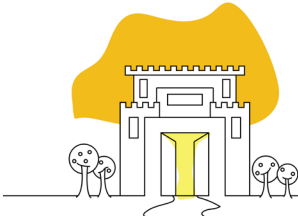
- Wisdom with time

- Pray for each of us to keep working out, each new day, how to maximise gospel opportunities.

- Wisdom for our government

- COVID 19 management and recovery.

- Fire management, water storage, energy production, primary production, the environment, and the cost of living.



Week 9. The Perfected Kingdom

To begin...

When you think of "heaven," what comes to your mind?

What has struck you about the character of God as you have taken a quick journey through the whole bible in the last term?

Background

We have been waiting nearly 2000 years for Jesus' return but the delay will not go on forever. The world is heading for a conclusion. Just as over and over we have seen God be faithful to his promises in the first coming of Jesus, so he will fulfill his promises about his second coming. Jesus will come again and complete God's eternal plan of salvation; he will introduce the perfected kingdom.

Today we are going to look at the end of the book of Revelation. In some ways we have gone full circle as God's people are presented in God's place under his rule and blessing. But there is something beautifully new and amazing about this future.

Read Revelation 21:1-8

What images are used to describe the perfected kingdom?

How do these images build on Old Testament promises?

What will life be like in the perfected kingdom?

How is this description of God's new creation different and/or better to the ways people often think about heaven?

Read Revelation 22:1-6

The descriptions here pick up on features of Genesis 2:8-14 & 3:14-24.

What connections can you see? How does the new creation compare with the present one we experience?

For further reading

Much of Revelation 21 & 22 draws deeply upon concepts and promises from the Old Testament. To get a taste for it, read these few passages from Isaiah and see the connections to Revelation.

Passage	What connections do we see?	What can we conclude?
Isaiah 54:11-15		
Isaiah 55:1-5		
Isaiah 60:1-3		
Isaiah 65:17-25		

Read Revelation 21:22-22:5

What features of the perfected kingdom are described here?

Who will enjoy this new creation?

Reflect

According to Revelation 21 & 22 how should we think about our future as God's people? What makes it so good?

Do you think we Christians think enough about the 'things that must soon take place' (22:6)?

Why/why not? How would it help us if we did? What can we do to make this more 'real' for us?

Prayer

- Pray for Growth Groups across our church
 - For humbly sitting under God's word together
 - For praying for each other, and pastoral care
 - For serving and reaching out together
 - For raising up and training new leaders
 - For following up those not in growth groups, on the fringe of church, or that we haven't seen for a while.
- Pray for those we know who don't know Christ
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Work
 - Neighbours

