

GOD WITH US

Session One: The Big Picture

Our aim in this session is to think about how we approach the Bible as a whole: that we see it as a cosmic drama about the God who keeps coming down to be with his people.



1. As we open our Bibles we begin a journey. We step on to a roadway.
 - Where does this roadway begin? (see Gen. 1:1)
 - Where does it end? (see Rev. 21:1)
2. What does it mean to read the Bible: “With both hands”? “With bifocals”?
3. Throughout the pages of the Bible we see that God keeps coming down:
 - In Genesis, God comes down into _____.
 - In Exodus, into _____.
 - In Kings, Chronicles, into _____.
 - In the Gospels, God comes in _____.
 - In Acts, God comes in _____.
 - In Revelation, he comes _____.



4. What was the first activity of the resurrected Jesus? (see Lk. 24:27)
5. “From beginning to end in this book there is only ever one God,” who reveals himself to us in the Scriptures and calls us. To what is God calling us?
6. How do you see yourself in relation to God’s unfolding plan: As only an observer on the roadside, or as part of God’s plan?
7. If you see yourself as part of God’s plan, how should this affect your thoughts and actions in the present? How does it affect your view of the future?



Home study: Read Genesis 1-3 and Revelation 21-22.

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Session Two: In the Garden

“Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden;
there he put the man he had formed.” Genesis 2:8

In the creation account we see that the transcendent came down to the level of the immanent.
The garden of Eden is the first place on earth where humans could meet with God
and develop their full potential as his image bearers.



1. What is the meaning of the word 'Torah'?
2. At the beginning of both the Old and New Testaments the Spirit of God is active—hovering over the chaos (Gen. 1:1-2) and then over the young virgin Mary (Lk. 1:35). What do these two accounts teach us about the unity and also the progression of the Bible?

3. Quickly scan the opening words of Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26:

- What phrase is repeated?
- What happened when God spoke?



4. What was Satan's primary tactic in the temptation of Adam and Eve? (see Gen. 3:1)

- Is the question: “Did God really say” relevant today? How do you answer that question?

5. In the ancient Near East, gardens often had royal connotations. Kings would place images of themselves in the garden to signify their reign. What is the possible significance of the first humans being created “in the image of God” and placed in a garden (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:8)?



6. For what purpose did God place Adam in the garden? (see Gen 2:15)

7. “God intended mankind to be his regents, ruling under him, reflecting his image, but never forgetting that he is the ultimate sovereign.”

- Did mankind forget? Explain.
- Do we?

Home study: Read Genesis 11-12 and 28:10-17

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Session Three: The One of God's Choice

The number 'one', as it is used in the Bible, gives us a striking insight into the uniqueness of the one God and how he works through one man, Adam; one people, Israel; one king, David and ultimately through one Lord, the Messiah, Jesus Christ. He always chose one for the sake of many.

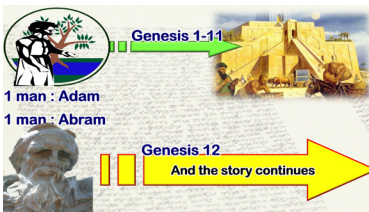


1. Read Genesis 11,3-4. For what purpose did men build the tower (or ziggurat) of Babel?

- Is this 'spirit of Babel' or Babylon still present today? Explain.

2. The so-called 'stairway to heaven' on the ancient ziggurat was seen as a link between an inanimate deity and earth.

- How was this different from the stairway in Jacob's dream (Gen. 28:10-17)?



- Read John 1:50-51. Who does Jesus say is the ultimate link between heaven and earth?

3. What is the significance of the fact that many people are involved in building Babel (Gen. 11:1-9), but God's plan begins with one man (Gen. 12:1-5)?

4. As we trace the history of Israel, how may we see God preparing the world for the coming of the 'ultimate one of his choice', namely, Jesus Christ.



5. Why does the concept of 'the one of God's choice' (whether a person, a people or a place) arouse such strong feelings of antagonism to this very day?

Home Study: Read Exodus 1-3; 12-15; 19-20; 25:1-22; 31:1-11; 39:32-43; 40.

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Session Four: In the Tent

After the Exodus God lives among his liberated people in a tent—
a mobile sanctuary, which is both a ‘mini-cosmos’ and a marital home.



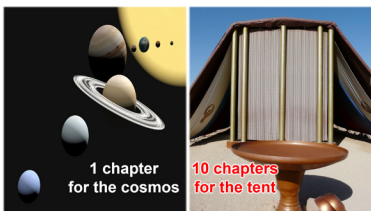
1. How significant is the exodus event to the background of the New Testament? Explain.

2. How are the events recorded in the book of Exodus a prototype of the great liberation accomplished by Jesus?



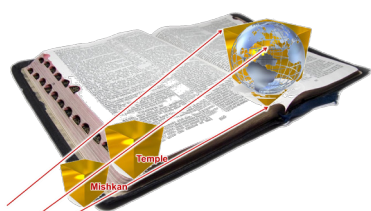
3. In the Hebrew Bible, the book of Exodus is called ‘shemot’: these are the names. Why is this significant?

4. Read Exodus 19:5. After delivering Israel from bondage in Egypt, where did God bring the people?



5. Why is it correct to define the Ten Commandments or Ten Words as the “ten words of freedom”? (see Exodus 20:2)

6. Read Exodus 25:8 and 29: 45-46. Why did God command Israel to build the tabernacle?



7. How is the tabernacle like a ‘marital home’?

Home Study: Read Exodus 15 alongside Revelation 15. Read Exodus 25-26 alongside Hebrews 9.

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Session Five: God's Kindergarten

A major part of the first five books of the Bible is devoted to the account of the Tent of Meeting. This is a home for God among his people, an 'embassy' of his kingdom and a classroom where he teaches them about sin that separates, how access is made possible and about holiness as a lifestyle.



1. In the Hebrew Bible, Leviticus is called: 'Vayikra': "And he said". Why? (see Leviticus 1:1; 4:1; 5:14; 6:1, etc.)

What does this tell us about the significance of this book?

2. What does the structure of the tabernacle (i.e. the perimeter fence, tent, inner curtains) teach about sin?
3. What does Leviticus teach about access—that is, how and through whom could people come into God's presence? (see Leviticus 16:1-5; 17:1-11)



4. What was the role of the high priest? (see Hebrews 5:1-4; 8:3; 9:6-7)

5. How does the figure of the high priest help us understand the role of the Lord Jesus Christ? (see Hebrews 4:14-5:10; 9:11-28)

6. What does it mean to be holy? (see Leviticus 19:1; 1 Peter 1:3-5,13-21; Romans 8:29)



7. Why is it important to listen to the whole Bible (Old and New Testaments) 'in stereo' ?

Home Study: Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20; 1 Samuel 8 and 12; Psalm 2

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Session Six: In the Temple

Central to the relationship of God and Israel is the temple in Jerusalem. In Jewish thinking, the sweep of Biblical history is defined in terms of the temple, and three figures: the prophet, the priest and the king play key roles.



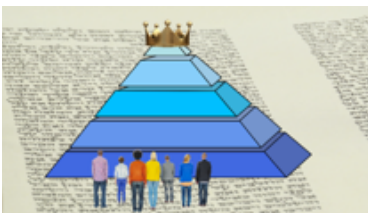
1. Biblical Hebrew has no word for 'history'. Instead, they use the word 'memory'. What is the difference between viewing the Bible as just 'history' and viewing it as 'memory'?

2. On what basis were kings in Israel to be appointed? (see Deuteronomy 17:15)



3. When a king took the throne, what was the first task required of him? (see Deuteronomy 17:18-20)

4. What was the primary role of the king?



5. To whom does the teaching about kingship point? (see Psalm 2:6-8; Revelation 11:15)

6. Read Psalm 2:1-3: How do the 'kings of the earth' react to God's anointed king? Do we still see this reaction today?

7. What was the role of the prophet?



8. If the prophets were alive among us today, what would they identify as our idols?

Home Study: Read Isaiah 39; Jeremiah 1 and 2; Lamentations 3-4;
2 Chronicles 36:15-23; 2 Kings 24:18—25:30

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Session Seven: Perspectives on History — Samuel, Kings and Chronicles

Samuel, Kings and Chronicles are historical books spanning the crucial period of the monarchy and the division of the kingdoms leading up to the exile. For the most part, they look at the same period, but from different perspectives.



1. The writer of 1 and 2 Kings addresses the question was “why the exile?” Summarize his answer. (see 2 Kings 24:18-20; also Isaiah 1:1-9).

- Is this issue relevant today? Explain.

2. What question does 1 and 2 Chronicles address?



- Is this issue relevant today? Explain.

3. What does the exile teach us about:

- the nature of man?
- the character of God?



4. What does it mean to stand behind the prophets and look forward with them?

Home Study: Read 1 Kings 8:10-11; John 1:14 and 2:13-22; Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 8:40-48

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Session Eight: In the Body

God's revelation of himself comes to a climax as he comes to dwell with his people in the person of Jesus.



1. What did Greek architects use as the primary model or proportions for building their dwellings and temples?

2. What was the purpose or significance of the Jewish temple?

3. What does it mean that Jesus replaced the temple? (see John 1:14; 2:13-22)



4. What is the significance of the fact that Jesus learned a trade? Does this make any difference in the way we think about our daily work? Explain.

5. Since Jesus grew up in a Jewish home and village, what are the main things that would have shaped his daily life?



6. What was the purpose of practices such as the 'brachot' ('blessings'), the placing of the 'mezuzah' on the door post of the house, or putting tassels on the hems of garments?

7. When Jesus taught the people, what was the main thrust of his message? (see Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:16-21,43)

8. What is a parable? Why don't parables have an ending?

Home study: Read Matthew 1:1,18-23; 3:16-4:2; 5:1-2; 28:16-20; Mark 1:1-12; Luke 1; John 1:1-14

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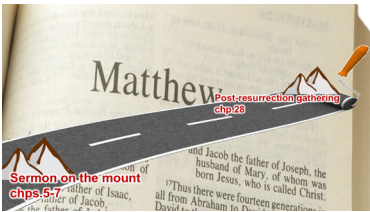
Session Nine: Jesus from all Angles

There is only one Jesus, but through the eyes of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John the Scriptures give us four distinct perspectives about him.



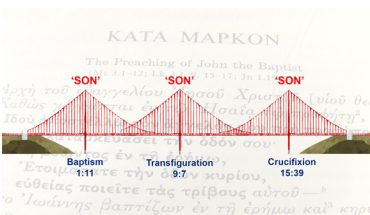
1. In what sense do the Gospel writers sit on the shoulders of the Old Testament prophets?

2. How does Matthew begin and end his gospel? (see Matthew 1:1, 21-23; 28:20)



3. What similarities do we find between Matthew 4:1-2; 5:1-2 and Exodus 19:1-11; Numbers 14:33?

4. What does Mark emphasize in his accounts of the baptism, transfiguration and crucifixion of Jesus? (See Mark 1:9-11; 9:7; 15:39)



5. What similarities do we find between Genesis 1:1-3 and Luke 1:35?

6. Read Exodus 29:44-46; 40:34-35 and John 1:14.

- What connection does John make between the Tent of Meeting and the incarnation?



- How does John say that the God of Israel reveals his glory to the world?

Home Study: Read Exodus 12:1-14; 19:1-9,16-19; Luke 22:14-20; Acts 2:1-4

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Session Ten: In the Spirit

The descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost marks the beginning of another vital stage in the unfolding drama of Scripture. The account in Acts 1 and 2 is not a model for the experience of every individual believer, but the record of the coming of God at a defining moment in history.



1. Where in the Bible are we introduced to the person of the Holy Spirit?

2. Read Genesis 1:1-3. What relationship do we see between the Spirit of God and his Word?

3. Read Exodus 19:16-19 and Acts 2:1-4.

- What are the similarities between these two accounts?

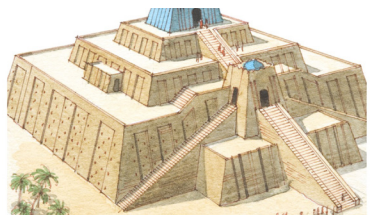


- As we study Pentecost, why is it important to understand what happened centuries before at Mount Sinai?

4. A similar period of time (50 days) separates the first Passover from Sinai (Exodus 12 and 19) and Christ's Passion from Pentecost. What is the significance of this?

5. What was the goal of the 'Babel builders'? (See Genesis 11:1-4)

6. How does the 'spirit of Babel' differ from the work of the Spirit of God in his people? (See 1 Peter 2:4-5; Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:14-16)



Home Study: Read Acts 22:1-21; 23:6-11; Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; Ephesians 2

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Session Eleven: The Beginning of the End

Paul paints a picture of God's cosmic plan with dramatic, sweeping strokes.
He thinks in terms of two ages: 'this age', which is still around us,
and 'the age to come' which has burst in with the coming of Jesus Christ.



1. According to Paul, who are the two main characters in the history of our world?
(See Romans 5:12-19).

2. Compare these two men in terms of:

1. _____

2. _____

Two acts:

Two ages:

Two states:



3. How does the account of David and Goliath demonstrate the idea that one can represent many? (See 1 Samuel 17:8-11,45-54)



4. List some of the images that Paul employs to describe what happens to us in Christ (See Ephesians 2:4-22; 5:8; Colossians 1:13-14; 21-22; 2:13-14; 3:1-3,12).

Home Study: Read Genesis 1-3; Isaiah 25:6-8; 26:1-4; 60:1-3; 62:1-5; 65:17-25;
Revelation 4-5; 20-21

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Session Twelve: In the City — The New Creation

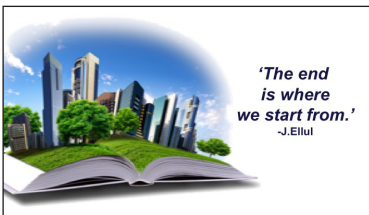
As we have studied the Bible together we have met a God who has come down into the garden, the tent, the temple, in the flesh and in the Spirit. Now as we look at the last book of the Bible, there is a sense of anticipation — for God is coming down to dwell with his people in the New Jerusalem.



1. Where in the Bible do we first encounter the major themes of Revelation?

2. According to Revelation 21, what is the ultimate goal of God's plan?
(See Revelation 21:1-5)

3. In what way is the Bible like a “great creation sandwich”?



4. How does the scene described in Revelation 21:1-5 differ from the scene recorded in Genesis 11:1-4?

5. What images do we find in Revelation 21 and 22 that are found earlier in Isaiah?
(See Isaiah 25:6-8; 26:1-4; 60:1-3; 62:1-5; 65:17-25)

6. What do Revelation 4 and 5 teach about the identity of ‘the Lamb’? (cf. Isaiah 53:4-7; John 1:29). How do these chapters contribute to our understanding of the Trinity?



7. The first letter of the Hebrew Scriptures, ‘bet’, is also the first letter of the Hebrew word for ‘home’. Why is this a fitting image for the entire biblical story?
(See Genesis 1:1; 2:8; 3:8; John 1:14; Rev 21:3; 22:1-5).

8. How does the teaching of Revelation give hope to the believer?