



the story

sermon study



en they came into the midst of Imael the son of Netaniah killed hem into the midst of a pit, he and ere with him. But ten men were

us the way in which we should walk and the thing we should do. Then Jeremiah the prophet said to them, "I have heard. Indeed, I will pray to the Lord your

God, and according to all that the Lord your God says, so declare to us and we will do it." And I have this day declared it to you, but you

44 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning

all the Jews who dwell in the land of Egypt, who dwell at Migdol at Tahpanhes, at Noph, and in

**from creation
to consummation**

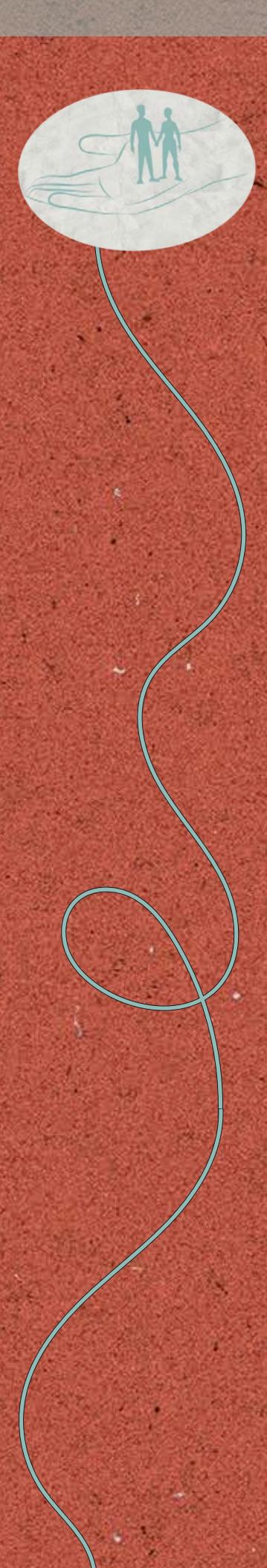
THE STORY SERMON STUDY

This fall, Renew Church will be working through the metanarrative of the Bible in a nine-week series.

Our hope and goal is to help everyone increase their familiarity with Scripture and recognize the significance of often overlooked passages.

As Paul tells us, "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). Together, we will trace the red thread of Jesus throughout the entire story of the Bible.





SESSION 1

CREATION

GENESIS 1-2

The Hebrew Bible (as we call it the Old Testament) is referred to as the TANAK, which is an acronym of Hebrew words that make up the Old Testament. Those collections are the Torah, the Nevi'im, and the Ketuvim. Torah, is the Law what we call the Pentateuch. The Nevi'im is the Prophets. The Ketuvim is the Writings. These first five books are generally attributed to Moses. Genesis is the beginning of the Torah and where we meet creator God.

We find in the first two chapters of Genesis creation accounts. Now there are two different accounts one that runs from **1:1-2:3** and the second account is from **2:4-25**. This is an issue for some as they view this as two conflicting accounts of creation. Some commentators helps us when they say, *"Another option (increasingly preferred by a diverse range of commentators...is to take the two accounts as complementary: Each account is focused on a different aspect of creation."* (Mangum, Custiss, and Widder).

What are those different aspects of creation we might ask, the authors of Genesis 1-11 say "Genesis 1 presents a cosmic view of creation in broad, sweeping images—dividing heaven from earth, sea from sky, land from sea, and so on. Genesis 2 presents an earthly view of creation with the specific focus on the creation of humankind and their immediate environment. We could also make the distinction that Gen 1 focuses on God, while Gen 2 focuses on people. Brueggemann calls this second account 'a more intense reflection upon the implications of creation for the destiny of humanity.' In theological terms, we could describe Gen 1 as emphasizing God's transcendence (His quality of being separate and distinct from His creation) whereas Gen 2 emphasizes God's immanence (His quality of being present and involved with His creation)."

The main point of this passage is show us that God is unimaginably powerful, God is organized, and he approves of what he's made. So, what's the point? That we are introduced to God and we are inspired to worship him.

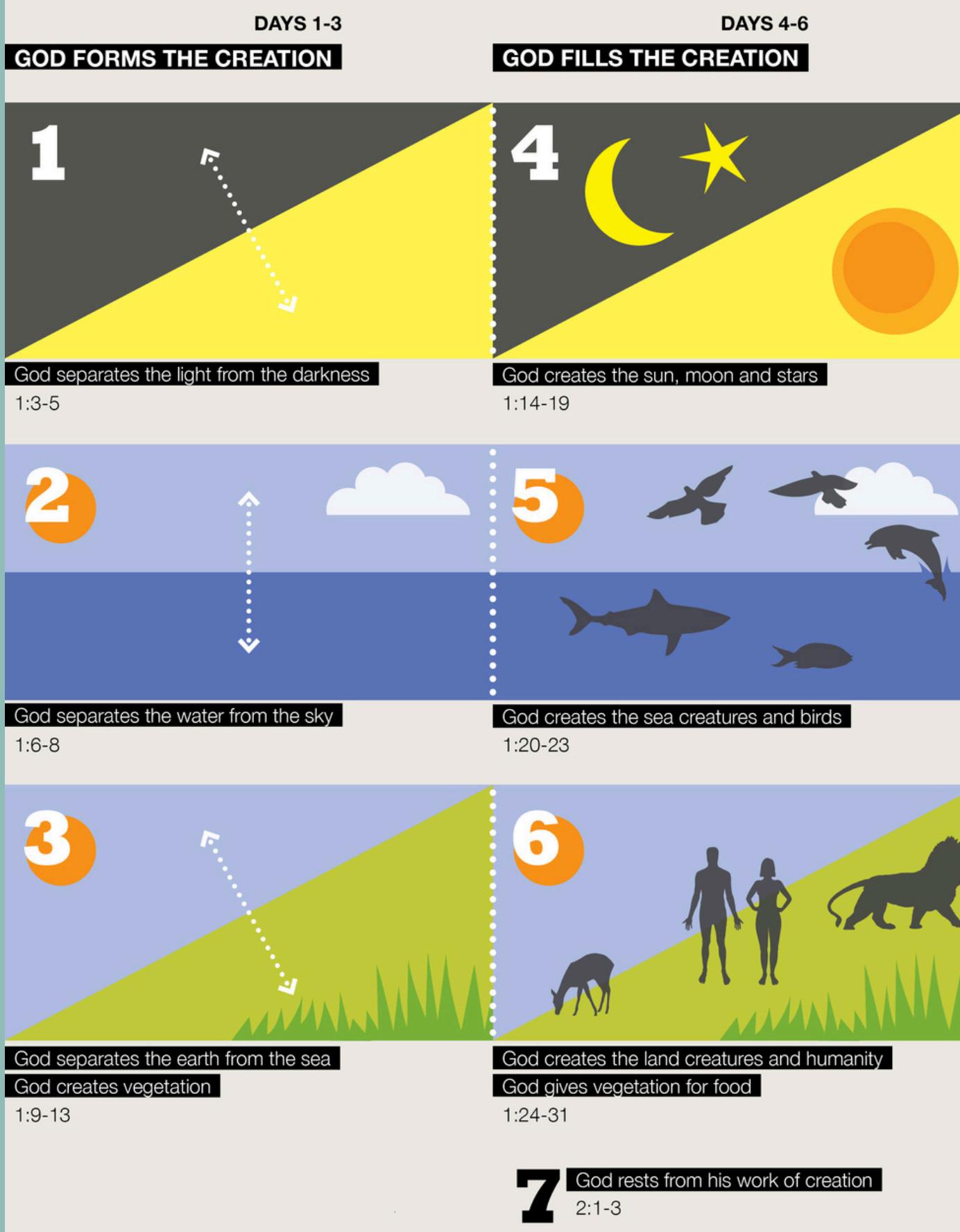
As the Jesus Storybook Bible states it, *"All the stars and the mountains and oceans and galaxies and everything were nothing compared to how much God loved his children. He would always move heaven and earth to be near them. Always. Whatever happened, whatever it cost him, he would always love them."* This is the takeaway from the creation accounts, God cares about his creation and especially humanity.

We find that right out of the gate God loves his creation and thinks it's good. We will find in the next session that humanity takes a turn which causes massive issues that we still deal with today. In these two accounts we can see the heart of God that would lead him to send his own Son. Our focus in the coming sessions is to help reveal the Metanarrative of Scripture, to see the red thread that is Jesus that runs throughout the whole of the Bible.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was most surprising in your reading of Genesis 1-2?
2. What are the characteristics about the two different accounts?
3. How is God characterized in these two accounts?
4. What does it mean to be created in the "image" and "likeness" of God?
5. What does the repeated statement "And God saw that it was good" reveal about God's perspective on His creation?
6. What does it mean that God made the seventh day holy?
7. How does the creation narrative affect your understanding of the value of life in all its forms?
8. In Genesis 2, what does the way God created man say about the kind of relationship they have?
9. Where do you see Jesus in this account?

CREATION GENESIS 1-2





Last week we learned about how God created everything. We now realize that his fingerprint is on all of creation, especially on humanity as we're created in His image. Like Wayne mentioned in the sermon last week, we wish things could have stayed at the Garden. But this week, we come to the rough part of the story where things go wrong. This week we look at the Fall of humanity into sin and death.



SESSION 2

THE FALL

GENESIS 3

Thirty-thousand-foot view of this chapter is this: We are introduced to the serpent, who lures the woman into disobeying God, who then invites the man to participate in the sin as well, they are ashamed and hide from God who then persuades them to admit to their disobedience ending with them being expelled from the Garden.

We find in v. 1 a call back to the prohibition that God makes about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (2:17). And toward the end of chapter 3 we find it looking back to the shamelessness found in 2:25. “The scene serves to invert the realities ordained by God at the end of Scene I and Scene II (chapters 1 &2)”. (Walter Brueggemann, Genesis)

What the serpent is doing is to misconstrue the command of God so that the woman will express the command in her own words. The serpent focuses on the penalty if they disobey, which drives a wedge between God and His children.

God had placed boundaries for humanity’s good, what the serpent does it is to “...practice theology in the place of obedience.” (Brueggemann) Now for the first time the boundary is not seen as a positive thing but seen as a threat to the man and woman. The trust that exists between God and His creation is eroded in a matter of moments through the crafty speech of the serpent.

We come up against questions often saying, well was God just tempting Adam and Eve? Why would he have placed the tree there at all? All things were created good as we just read in the two preceding chapters.

What John Walton thinks is this, "it is more in keeping with his [God's] character to understand that the tree would have use in the future. When the time was right, the first couple would be able to eat from it." A similar situation is when Jesus is tempted by the devil to rule all the kingdoms of the world if he would just bow down to Satan. There is nothing wrong with Jesus ruling all the kingdoms, that is his destiny. The problem is "bypassing the appropriate process and timing, seizing them through deviant means." What the presence of the tree reveals to us is the heart of God, that He has good planned for His creation.

Eve gets the focus of our retroactive offense, but we often forget that Adam was there with her. Grammatically, we find that all the verbs in this section are plural. Satan addressed Eve but included Adam in his temptation. Both were at fault, just as any of us would have been in the same situation.

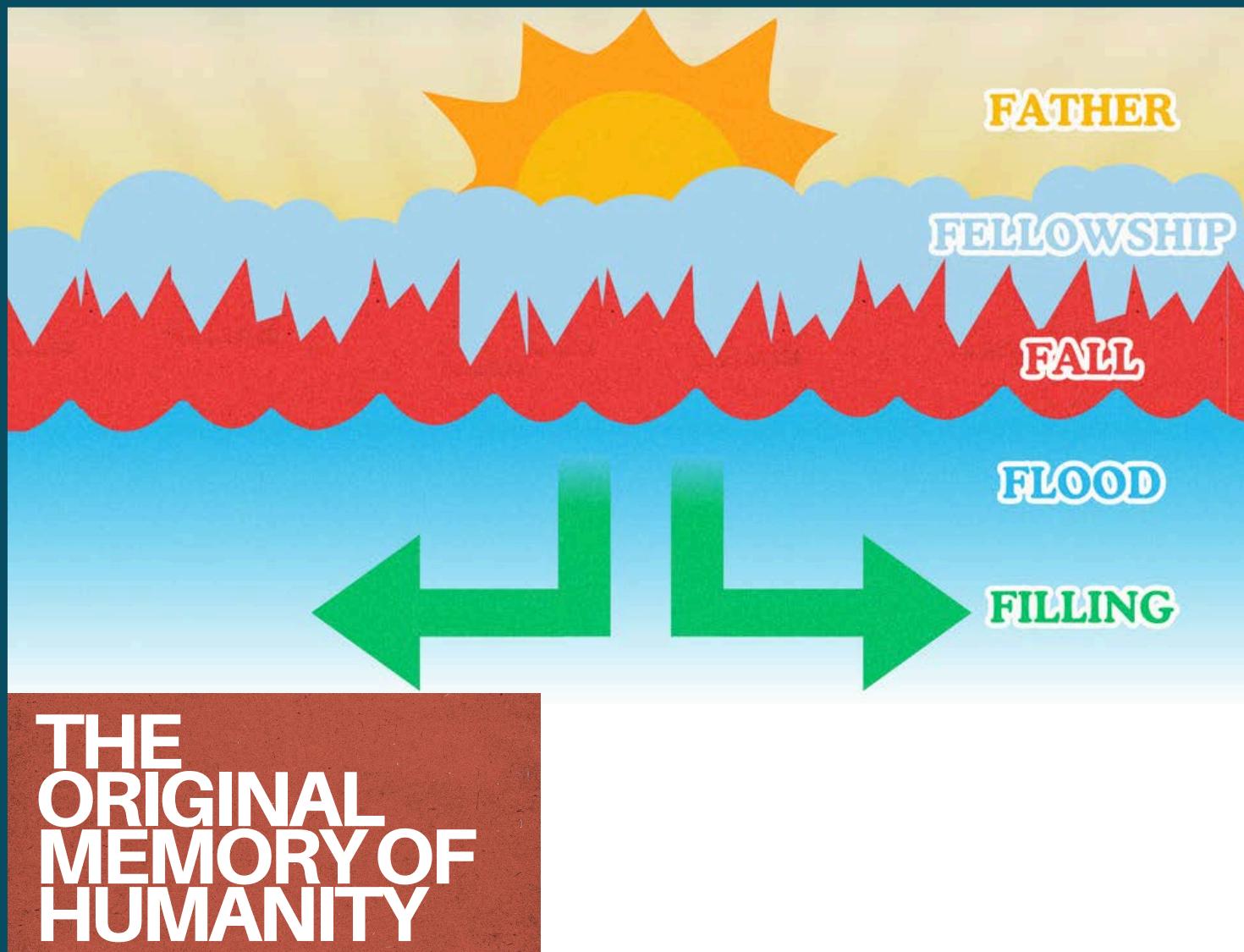
God comes down in the cool of the day, the text doesn't tell us if that's a normal occurrence. It certainly doesn't exclude that possibility. The couple hear God walking in the Garden and hide themselves from Him. They have realized they are naked, which they didn't take notice of before and hid themselves.

There are the set of curses that take up much of the text of chapter 3. The immediate focus is on the serpent. The curse set on the snake was to make it more docile and to associate it with death. The curse of the woman focuses on the pain that will come from childbirth and desire for headship. The ground is cursed because of the man and the ground will curse the man through the toil that will come from work.

After the curses God exiles the couple out of the Garden. He wanted to protect them from taking of the Tree of Life and living forever in this state of sin. God then provides clothes from animal skins for the couple, providing for them as they enter into a more difficult environment and provides a remedy for their newly developed shame (Walton). He sets a cherubim at the entrance to the Garden with a flaming sword to dissuade them from trying to reenter.

QUESTIONS:

1. What does the serpent's craftiness reveal about the nature of the temptation?
2. What was at the heart of the serpent's question posed to Eve?
3. What was the serpent accusing God of through his questions?
4. Have you ever tried shifting the blame off yourself? How?
5. What does Adam blaming Eve and Eve blaming the serpent reveal about human reactions to guilt and accountability?
6. What does this story teach us about confession of sin?
7. What does this story teach us about God's character?
8. How does God respond to the Adam and Eve?
9. How do we search for independence from God today?
10. What needs to change in your life after reading this story?



This graphic illustrates a concept developed by Dr. Thom Wolf, an anthropologist who conducted extensive research on creation stories across various cultures worldwide. His studies revealed major similarities or themes, which he termed the "Original Memory of Humanity." The graphic depicts two key aspects of Dr. Wolf's findings.

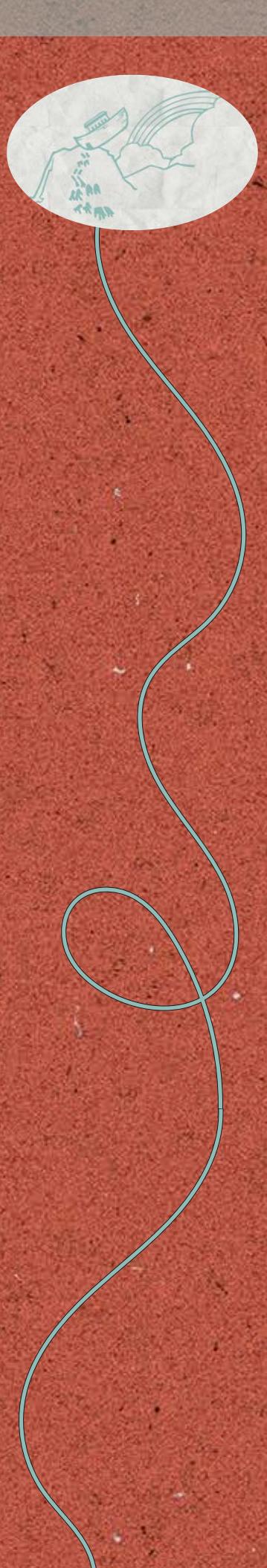
First, it shows the five common elements found in creation stories across cultures, represented by two sets of terms: "Father, Fellowship, Fall, Flood, and Filling" or alternatively, "Creator, Community, Chasm, Catastrophe, and Clan." These elements suggest a shared narrative

structure that includes a father-like deity, an initial state of harmony, a disruption often involving temptation, a catastrophic event, and the continuation of humanity.

Second, the graphic demonstrates Dr. Wolf's perspective on biblical history, illustrating how all of history converges on Jesus Christ and then flows outward from Him. As we explore the overarching story of Scripture, remember this concept and keep it in mind as we continue our study. The graphic serves to visually reinforce these ideas, emphasizing the connection between historical narratives and their fulfillment in Jesus Christ.



We pick up where we left off last week. God's good creation has been marred and damaged by the actions of humanity. God's desire was to draw humanity back into relationship with Him. We find in the Flood narrative lots of imagery used throughout the rest of The Story and some important themes moving forward. Just like in the creation accounts we want to read what the account of the flood actually says and learn from that as opposed to any children's books that we may have locked in our memory.



SESSION 3

THE FLOOD

GENESIS 6-9

What we find from the Fall account in Chapter 3 until now is an increasing in the sin and wickedness of humanity. Not only humanity, we find that even angelic beings are subject to this in 6:1-4. Where the story brings us is to a place where a hard reset seems to be the logical next step.

The focus that we should have on the story of the Flood is not specifics of how Noah would have fit or fed or kept all these animals separate. The focus in our minds should be on the changes that happen and what God will do moving forward to a New Creation. *"The creation has refused to be God's creation. That essential fracture between creator and creation is the premise and agenda of the flood narrative."* (Brueggemann) What he is getting at is that humanity decided to try and take our destiny into our own hands.

It is worth noting, a Flood account is common across Ancient Near Eastern cultures. As we engage with the book of Genesis it is important to realize there are many ancient cultures that have similar stories, but the focus and themes are very different from what the people of Israel write and proclaim about God. Biblical scholar, Walter Brueggemann, says this, *"The Genesis narrative is not a universal statement but a peculiarly Israelite statement in the categories of covenant. And it is not a statement about the world but about the God of Israel and his peculiar way in transforming the world. (underlines mine)"* To put it plainly, more than anything the author of Genesis was trying to communicate to the listeners truths about the character of the God of Israel, Yahweh, and how this God interacts with His creation.

We need to look at the text and see why God believed that destroying all life was necessary. What does the text itself say is the reason? Sin and wickedness have reached a fever pitch and God must respond. Looking at v. 6 we find that God's heart is not filled with rage, but with grief. God hasn't lost control and lashed out, but as the book of Daniel says (Dan 5:27) Humanity "You've been weighed on the scales and found wanting." God judiciously looked at the product of the human heart and make a judgement call to destroy life.

Much can be said and considered about the ark and the discussion about all the animals included. What we'll focus on is what the folks at the Bibleproject call "Hyperlinks". This concept is the idea that Scripture is pointing to other places in Scripture. Just like when you're reading an article online and there is some blue text that is underlined to bring you to another article. For example, from this story we find God providing salvation or deliverance *through* the water, Noah had to "go through" the water to be saved by God. We see lots of other places in Scripture where God saves through the water, some examples: the Israelites crossing through the Red Sea with Moses, the next generation crossing into the promised land with Joshua through the Jordan river, in the New Testament God uses the waters of baptism that we go through to symbolize the salvation we received. Do you see anything else in this story that hyperlinks somewhere else in Scripture?

There is a long narrative (Gen 6:5-8:17) that tells the story of Noah creating the ark, God gathering the animals, and Noah with his family waiting on the ark for an extended time for the flood waters to subside. After waters recede Noah, his family, and all the animals leave the ark.

God then blesses Noah and his children, as well as all the animals. The call was to be fruitful and multiply and cover all the earth. God determined not to destroy all life like this again and as a sign leaves His war-bow in the sky. This of course means the rainbows that we see, each time a rainbow is in the sky it reminds us that God has made a covenant with all of creation not to destroy with the flood like before.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did God decide to send the Flood?
2. Do you see repeated words in v.11-13, what do they reveal?
3. How did God view Noah in comparison to the world around him?
4. What does it mean that Noah walked with God?
5. Why did God use water to destroy the world?
6. What is the ark used for in the Flood account? What does that mean for us?
7. How was sin passed on from generation to generation?
8. Why did God decide not to destroy all flesh with a Flood? (8:21)
9. What assurance does God give that He won't destroy all flesh with a Flood again?
10. How does the Flood account point us to Jesus?
11. After reading this account, what steps do you need to take in your walk with Jesus?



Last week we studied the Flood that God sent to destroy all flesh on the face of the earth. We found that this didn't resolve the sin problem in the world. Sin was on the ark with Noah and his family. They took it off the ark with them after the Flood waters receded. This week we turn to God making a covenant with a family that leads to the Law to guide people into relationship with Him.

SESSION 4

COVENANT & LAW

GENESIS 12 & 15, EXODUS 4

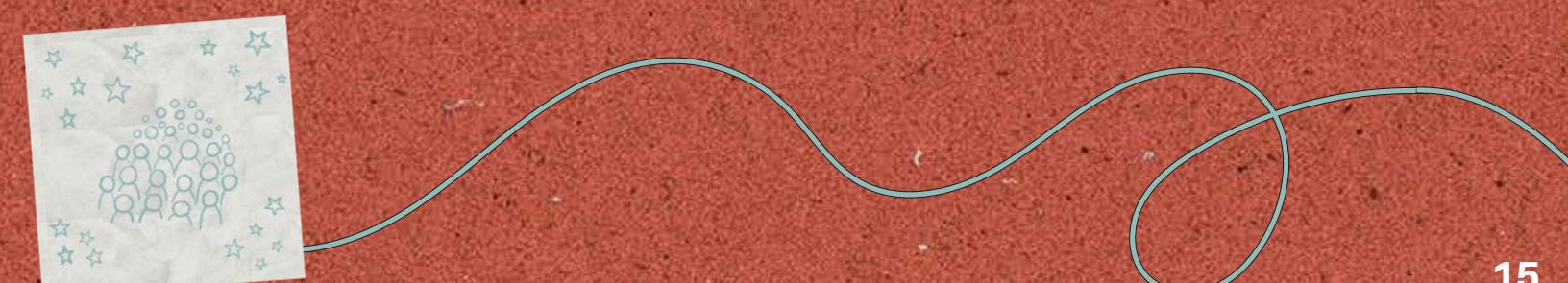
This is the portion of the Story where we focus down onto one family, the family of Abram. To start us off there is a problem, Abram's family is just him and his elderly wife Sarai. God blesses Abram and calls him to follow God's call to a land that God will show him. Here is where a common theme comes up, the theme of revelation. God reveals Himself to Abram, not the other way around.

What is revealed in the story of Abram and Sarai is trust in God. This is a God who was not known to Abram's family and calls them to give up familiar land and people to go to the unknown. This is a huge ask especially in the Ancient Near East, you are leaving the community system that protects people to strike out on your own. We know Abram and Sarai trust God because they leave!

Wayne's sermon focused on the promises that God makes to Abraham. Let's take some time to look at covenants and especially the one with Abraham. First, what is a covenant? It is a partnership between two parties to work toward a goal. We see that God created humanity to partner with Him in bringing more goodness out of creation. God makes promises and then there are commitments made by humanity.

The covenant between Abraham and God is that God will bless him, increase his family and provide land for them to grow in. Abraham must promise to trust God and teach his family to do what is right and just. God says that through this family He will bring His blessing on all the families of the world. The interesting part about this comes in chapter 15 of the book of Genesis.

Here we find God telling Abraham to cut up a young cow, goat, and a ram into two pieces each. He was to lay the two parts of the animals across from each other. In a covenant in the Ancient Near East the two parties would then walk together through the path of the carcasses. The symbolism there is that "may I be torn in two just like these animals if I don't uphold my commitment or promise to the covenant". What is unique in this is that Abram is asleep through the covenant making process. God, represented by the smoking firepot/flaming torch pass between those pieces symbolizing that He intends to keep His promise despite Abram.



What the covenants show us is that God intends to keep His promises to His people. He is characterized by longsuffering, patience, kindness and mercy.

As the story continues forward, we find Moses in the book of Exodus. One of those hyperlinks should be clear to us. Moses' name means "I drew him out of the water", he was "saved" through the water. Immediately we should see that Moses is called by God yet is still human and fails. He is a murderer. He kills an Egyptian trying to protect a fellow Hebrew.

God uses Moses to communicate His Law to the newly freed people of Israel. He wants to enter into a covenant with the whole of Israel and His promise is to be their God and give them the land if they commit to follow His Law.

The Law is the way for people to live as God would intend. Yet we find that sin made its way off the ark in Noah and his family. Sin is an internal problem for humanity. God wants to eventually write the Law on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). He is going to enable humanity to live out the Law like the people of Israel weren't able to. It is again pointing to a promised one that we see throughout Scripture.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did God choose Abram?
2. Why didn't God tell Abram where he was going?
3. How do we know Abram and Sarai agreed to trust God?
4. What does God promise Abram?
5. What do we learn about God's character through this narrative with Abram?
6. Can you relate to Moses' fears and anxieties? If so, how?
7. How does God choosing Moses encourage you?
8. What does the story show us about God's provision?
9. How does the story illustrate the concept of faith versus sight?
10. What does this story tell you about your place before God?



Abraham had the covenant established with him and his descendants which was the start to God's rescue plan.

Generations later, God covenants with the people of Israel and provides the Law to Moses to bring to the people. We found that even with the covenant, the people fail. Even with the Holy Law of God the people fail to live up to it. The Story continues as we dive deeper into the history of the people of Israel as we look at the Judges and the Monarchy.



SESSION 5

JUDGES

& MONARCHY

2 SAMUEL 7

To start, we were focused on one man and his immediate descendants. We then panned out and found that that small clan of 70 some odd people had become a numerous people group who were oppressed by the Egyptians. God decides to intervene in the plight of the people. He frees them through Divine means using Moses and Aaron.

The problem was, just as sin got on the ark with Noah, sin left Egypt with the people. They almost immediately fall into breaking the covenant God made with them. They decide to try and create a god in the image of a golden calf. After this they over and over test God's patience and care. God declares the generation that left Egypt will never enter the Promised Land but will wander the desert until they all die.

Once they are led into the land by Moses' successor, Joshua, they still don't fully obey God. He calls them to clear the land of all the nations and throughout the story they fail to fully do this and are tricked into alliances among other issues. Now that they're in the land God raises up people called Judges to lead the people.

We go through a period that, later in the book of Judges, is defined by a phrase that is repeated: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

The Judges are people raised up by God, given His Spirit to guide and call the people into God's righteous plan, they were deliverers from oppressors, they were generals and leaders. But, they were also human, they were also marked by the same sin that left the Garden with Adam, got off the boat with Noah and walked through the wilderness with Moses.

What we see in the Judges is God wanting to be the king of His people with these Judges as helpers in that. In the people of Israel, we find an unwilling partner in the covenant with God. They continue to be saturated by sin and defined by unholy living. With that repeated phrase we see that the people didn't even see God as king, there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

God then relents and allows the people to have a king. He does this; while reminding Samuel the people haven't rejected him, but they've rejected God. Samuel warns the people of the yoke that will be placed on them because of the kings to come but they are entrenched in their desire to be like the nations around them.

Importantly, within the narrative we find out that David is a king who has a heart that is after God. David is far from perfect; we see over the course of his life many failures. But what defines David more than anything is his desire to be in right relationship with God. He repents of failures and tries to chase after God's heart. To this king God makes a covenant of an everlasting kingdom to one of David's descendants.

"Here we have one of the most important prophetic texts in all the Bible. This is where we see God take up this office that was created through the sinful desires of the people of Israel and use it for the redemption of the world." – Pastor David

God will come down to humanity himself to become the King that is needed. Throughout the Gospels this will come up especially as we get to the Passion narratives. Jesus is labeled the "King of the Jews" by the Romans (see Luke 23:20, Matthew 27:37 etc.). Jesus is the rightful, honest, true King. The Story shows us that God is to be the King of our lives.

QUESTIONS:

1. What role do the Judges play in the life of Israel?
2. What is the main point of the judges in the overall Story, how does it contribute to the narrative?
3. What are some takeaways on God's character from the book of Judges?
4. Is Israel's desire for a king a good thing?
5. How does Samuel react to this desire?
6. Why is David picked as God's anointed?
7. How does the covenant to David play into our understanding of God?



We entered a new phase of The Story last week with the leadership of God's people being handed over to Judges first and subsequently to the monarchy. We found that all the leaders that steered the direction of God's people fell short. The hope for the people would not come through an earthly political leader. The hope would come from a promise that God made of a Perfect, Eternal King from David's line who would lead the people into all righteousness.

SESSION 6

PROPHETS & EXILE

JEREMIAH 42:1-43:2, 1 PETER 2:9-12

The people of Israel over and over through The Story fail to live up to God's covenant. The leaders and shepherds of God's people continually lead them astray and misuse them. Of course, there are bright spots in history but we find the trend is leaning toward abject failure to follow through with the covenant agreement with God.

Prophets aren't a new addition to The Story as even Abraham is called a Prophet (Genesis 20:7). This is simply the era where Prophets become extremely important to God's communication to His people. A Prophet is seen as someone who communicates God's will to the people, often we find in the Prophets calls against nations around them but more so we find God's language pointed toward His own people for their sin.

The Prophets often had a thankless job where they would call people in positions of power to righteousness. These were men and women who had a high calling which led to incredible moves of God. Think to Nathan in 2 Samuel 12, God calls him to confront the king of Israel and condemn his actions. This is a terrifying prospect. Think of Elijah in 1 Kings 17-19 and God's call on him to confront Ahab and all the prophets of Baal. Over and over we see the call of the Prophets is one that comes with great danger. It can't be put better than how the writer of Hebrews does,

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, accomplished justice, obtained what was promised, shut the mouths of lions, extinguished the effectiveness of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong from weakness, became mighty in battle, put to flight enemy battle lines. Women received back their dead by resurrection. But others were tortured, not accepting release, in order that they might gain a better resurrection. And others experienced mocking and flogging, and in addition bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died by murder with a sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, impoverished, afflicted, mistreated, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering about on deserts and mountains and in caves and in holes in the ground. And although they all were approved through their faith, they did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that they would not be made perfect without us.-Hebrews 11:32-40



They warned the people to return to their promise to uphold the covenant that God made with them. God spoke through them to warn the people of what would come. We find many places throughout the Prophetic books in the Old Testament. One place that stands out is Hosea, "Name him Lo-ammi for you are not my people and I am not your God" (Hosea 1:9). The prophet Jeremiah also spoke this truth in Jeremiah 25:8-11.

There are a plethora of examples of Prophets calling the people to repentance and warning them of the exile to come if they did not. The exile is a shocking moment in Jewish history that devastates the people and their understanding of God's plan. They thought simply being in the land, simply having the temple would protect them from any outside threat.

The people of the Northern Kingdom are brought into exile in two major events when the Assyrian Empire in 734 BC and 722 BC. These two events take 10 of the 12 tribes into exile. The Babylonian Exile takes the remaining 2 tribes (Judah and Benjamin) into exile in the year 586 BC.

The ominous words that Jeremiah 7 opens with "Do not trust in the deceitful words, saying, 'The temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh'". God's message through Jeremiah here is, just because the temple is here does not protect you or allow you to live however you please.

The Exile shows the people how seriously God takes a breach in covenant. He takes this sin that has come down through the ages in the human heart deadly serious. That is why He promises a future King who will set all these things right!

All of us who are here on earth are exiles in a sense. We are citizens of the Kingdom of God which hasn't come to fulfillment yet. We, like the Judean exiles before us, look forward to the day that the exile ends. We look forward to the day Jesus Christ the Risen King comes in all of His glory to bring us to the promised land, and that promised land is the New Heavens and the New Earth.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is a prophet?
2. What did they communicate?
3. What do we learn from the prophets?
4. What is the difference between true and false prophecy?
5. How does the Exile factor into our experience as Jesus followers?
6. Have you ever felt exiled?
7. What is surprising to you about the Exile?
8. What is the call that God gives to the Judean exiles in Babylon? How can we apply that to our lives?
9. What can we learn about faithfulness from the Judean exiles?
10. What does the call of 1 Peter 2 mean for us?
11. How does Jesus play into this portion of The Story?



We leave the Old Testament behind this week as we transition into the New Testament. It is here that the 400 years of Silence between the Testaments ends! God moves and fulfills the prophesies that had been set out centuries before. This Sunday we focus on the Redemption that God offers us through the person of Jesus of Nazareth. What is redemption? That's what we'll explore this week.



SESSION 7

REDEMPTION

HEBREWS 1:1-5

As Pastor Wayne talked about on Sunday, we must understand that we are Barabbas. We are the unworthy, sin-filled, rebel that isn't deserving of the grace and mercy God shows us. As we've said throughout this series, there is an internal problem of sin. We are born with a sin nature that makes us opposed to and even enemies of God.

The offensive grace of God is shown to sinners, and this infuriates the religious people of Jesus' day, and it continues to even today. Jesus is a friend to sinners and sufferers (see Luke 7:34 or 15:2). The issue many of us today have is realizing that we are those sinners and sufferers. We tend to focus the sin of those around us and minimize our own sin. There is a reason Jesus speaks the parable of the speck and log (see Matt 7:3-5).

What exactly is redemption though? Redemption in Scripture is related to the people of Israel being redeemed from slavery in Egypt. This theme repeats throughout the Old Testament (Exodus 6:6-8; Psalm 111:6-9; Deuteronomy 24:18 etc.). Meaning God has done the work to free us from slavery.

We, as Paul explains to us, were enslaved to sin (Romans 6:15-23) but we were set free by Jesus. This is a wildly important reality for us to grasp. We were dead in our sin and trespasses (Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 2:13). Our sin wasn't small in the sense we just needed a little spring cleaning in our hearts. As Pastor Wayne said, we are all infected by sin and it's a fatal exposure. We were enemies of God, not just neutral parties (Romans 8:7-21).

Thanks be to God, we are redeemed by his unprecedented life, work, death, and resurrection. God so loved the world He gave His only Son (John 3:16). We are redeemed or ransomed at a price: the life of the only perfect one, Jesus. The joy is that we don't stay in our sin and trespasses, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit of God to live holy lives.

We are called to respond to the gracious gift of God and orient our lives toward obedience to this loving God. We have been given a heart of flesh that can be shaped by God's hand and not the heart of stone characterized by our fallen nature. God recognizes the way forward is to follow in the Way of Jesus. We'll explore more in the coming weeks on how this comes together.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why would God speak in many ways to different people? (see v. 1 & 2)
2. In what different ways has God chosen to communicate to people? How does God primarily speak to us today?
3. What does it mean that the Son is the heir of all things?
4. What does it mean that Christ is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature?
5. How does Jesus uphold or sustain all things?
6. What does it mean that he has become much better than the angels?
7. What is the importance of being reminded of our need for Jesus' work?
8. Has your view of sin changed after this sermon?
9. How can we live in light of the redemption we've been shown?



Jesus' work has provided the means for the redemption of humanity. His life, death, and resurrection have paved the way for us to have relationship with our creator God. This week we see how we are able to walk in the Way of Jesus. We delve into the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, and His role in the life of Jesus followers. We also see how we are regenerated into new creations and the hope that we have for the life to come.

SESSION 8

HOLY SPIRIT

ACTS 2

We saw last week how we have been Redeemed by the work of Jesus Christ. Now the process doesn't end there. It continues with the concept of Regeneration. What is Regeneration? It is New Life! Not only have we been set free from our captivity to sin, we have died with Christ, and now we have been raised to New Life with Him. This comes into focus in the second chapter of the book of Acts where we get the arrival of the Holy Spirit for all of those who call Jesus their Lord.

There are a few passages that stand out with this theme. One that stands out is *Ephesians 2:4-7*
"But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, and we being dead in trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ (by grace you are saved), and raised us together and seated us together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, in order that he might show in the coming ages the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness upon us in Christ Jesus."

Regeneration creates us into something totally new. Paul says as much in *2 Corinthians 5:17*. Jesus is the firstborn among a new humanity that God has initiated with Jesus' resurrection (*Colossians 1:18*). So, because we claim Christ we will follow in His footsteps by being raised from the dead as He was.

The call on a Christian is that we follow in the Way of Jesus. He tells us in *John 14:6* that He is the Way, and this means that there is a path that has been blazed that we are meant to walk in. All Christians are called to be disciples of Jesus, meaning we learn from and imitate Him. Our actions should reflect His; our words should reflect His; our thoughts should reflect His; our devotion should reflect His; our very lives should reflect His life.

We know that these things aren't possible in our own power. That is the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit as He is the one who makes possible these changes. The Holy Spirit is the one who enables us to lead holy lives. His direction, power, desires, and influence will over the course of time shape us if we're willing. He allows us to be holy as God is holy (*1 Peter 1:15*).



So, what is the call of a Christian? It is to allow the Holy Spirit to make us into new creations for the purposes of God's Kingdom. This Regeneration leads us to the final act in The Story, that of Consummation which we'll discuss next week.

Just as with Redemption, Regeneration is not something that we do on our own power. It isn't something that comes about because we believe the correct thing. It happens because the Holy One of God purchased us at a price and as a result of His work we are made into something new.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who is the Holy Spirit?
2. What is the Holy Spirit's role?
3. How does one receive the Holy Spirit?
4. Are the miraculous gifts of the Spirit for today?
5. What is the fruit of the Spirit?
6. What does it mean that the Spirit intercedes for us?
7. Is there someone in your life who you've seen tangible regeneration in? Share that story.
8. How can you work alongside the Holy Spirit in your journey of following Jesus?



The Story of Scripture is about how God created the world good and is working to make the world good again. As we have seen, God is faithful the whole way. This Sunday, we arrived at the final chapter of The Story. There is only one promise left for God to fulfill, and its fulfillment means nothing less than new creation!



SESSION 9

CONSUMMATION

REVELATION 21 & 22

Pastor Wayne's message this Sunday was about what happens at the end. For those who follow and worship Jesus, the end is peace and blessedness. For those who oppose Him, there is only weeping and gnashing of teeth.

When we pass away, there is an immediate destination, either heaven with the Lord or hell apart from Him. Pastor Wayne pointed us to Luke 16:19-31, where Jesus tells a story about an unnamed rich man and a poor man named Lazarus. The rich man lived greedily and unjustly, ignoring the plight of Lazarus, and God judged him accordingly. He died and went to Hades (the Greek idea of hell). There he was tormented, wishing for a drop of water to cool his tongue, but there was none to be found. Jesus is clear: there is no getting out of Hades. Lazarus, on the other hand, died and went to Abraham's bosom (a Jewish idea denoting the place where righteous souls are kept until the resurrection of the dead). Whereas on earth, Lazarus suffered in his poverty, in Abraham's bosom, he was comforted.

This story teaches us that we each have an eternal destination that is determined by how we respond to Jesus (v31). In our day and age, thinking of "where we will go when we die" may be unfashionable and even uncomfortable, but Scripture clearly teaches that we ought to consider it.

God also invites us to think about the end of this age when Jesus comes again. Revelation 21 and 22 is the most extensive discussion of what this will look like (see also 1 Corinthians 15:20-58). We are told that there will be a new heaven and a new earth and a new Jerusalem where God's people will dwell and reign with Him forever. When that day comes, there will be no more tears or mourning or death, only life and blessedness will remain.

Knowing what happens at the end informs how we live in the present. Ephesians 5:15-20 tell us to be careful how we live so that we can make the most of our time before the end comes. The days in which we live are evil with many forces, the devil foremost among them, trying to lead us away from God and eternal life with Him. Our call is to be filled with God's Spirit, to worship God regularly and wholeheartedly, and to persevere in faith and righteousness until the end, knowing that there is an inheritance beyond measure awaiting us.

QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever considered what will happen to you after you die?
2. Why is it important to consider our eternal destination in light of what God reveals to us in His Word? How does God's truth differ from what the world says?
3. What thoughts or feelings does the idea of going to heaven to be with Jesus when you die provoke in you?
4. What is the difference between going to be with the Lord when we die and receiving a new resurrected body? (Philippians 1:23; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58)
5. What sticks out to you about the description of the new heavens and earth in Revelation 21:1-4?
6. Who will inherit this new creation and why? (Revelation 21:7, 27)
7. Why does the new Jerusalem have the names of the twelve sons of Israel and the twelve apostles written on it? (Revelation 21:10-14)
8. What does it mean that we will have no need of a moon or sun because of God's illuminating presence? (Revelation 21:22-27)
9. What image most resonates with you from Revelation 22:1-5 and why?
10. Why does Jesus reiterate that the "time is near" and that he is "coming quickly"? How should we respond?