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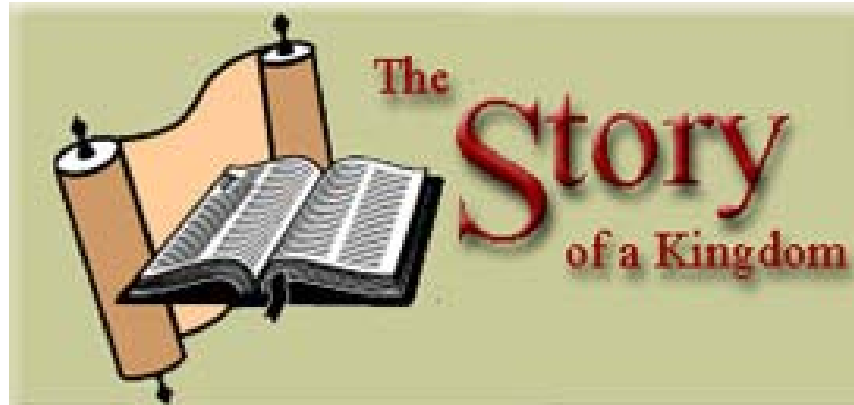
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A Simple Explanation of the Bible

Jonathan Gibson

For Tony, and my Chinese friends.

“...that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

John 20:31

With thanks to Drew, Jack and Charles.

This book is evidence of your influence on my life.

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Preface

As someone has said, of writing a book there is no end. I started this book four years ago, thinking it would take me a few months. Ha! Even as I write I know there are sections I would like to change and things I would add in and remove to give greater clarity. But life is not about writing books, and there comes a time when I must enter the seventh day and let the mind and fingers rest. But before the sun rises on that day, let me first explain what this book is and how it will be best used.

The Story of a Kingdom has arisen out of four years work with international students. I have written it because I could not find Bible study material for small groups that explained the Bible at the level of someone whose second language is English. It is primarily for people who want to understand what the whole Bible is about; or put another way, who wish to understand Jesus in His right context. I follow the theme of God's Kingdom through the Bible, using the definition: God's people, living in God's place, under God's rule and blessing.¹ I seek to show how God's Kingdom in the Old Testament builds up to prepare us for Jesus and His Kingdom in the New Testament.

The best way to use this Study Guide is with an open Bible. I have designed it in such a way to encourage the Bible to be open in one hand, and this book in the other. The idea is that the participants in the Bible study read the part from the Bible, and then the leader asks questions on the passage. The leader can explain any important or difficult English words, and then a participant can read the explanatory paragraph under each section. This may seem long and tedious, but international students say they learn more from reading than from listening. It is also a good way for them to improve their English and thus attract more internationals to the study. We have found that if a study goes "smoothly" it should take just over one hour to conduct. International students are quite prepared to study for this long, but chapters can be shortened if the group is struggling with the time.

¹P I have arrived at this definition through the work of Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1981) and *According to Plan* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1991). The main flow diagram is also based on Goldsworthy's kingdom structure.

There are weaknesses in this book. It's too long for there not to be. But I do hope that at the very least it provides you with a framework in which to read and teach the Bible. If it goes some way to accomplishing this I will be extremely glad.

There is also a shorter version of the Study Guide in the *SOK Book*, which is designed for conducting a shorter series on the Bible, or giving the book out to internationals to be read individually, or studied one-on-one. This can be purchased online from our website www.sok.org.uk.

I am indebted to the following books in writing the SOK material: *Two Ways to Live* (Sydney: Matthias Media, 1988), *Gospel and Kingdom* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1981), *According to Plan* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), *Look to the Rock* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), *Salvation Begins* (Sydney: Aquila Press, 2000), *The Faith of Israel* (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), and *From Creation to New Creation* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003).

There are numerous people I wish to thank for contributing to this work over the last four years. My thanks start with Peter Bovill who has been a good friend and brother in gospel work for some years now. Peter first led the international Bible study with me, and typed up very early drafts of my notes, although he's probably forgotten that already. Also involved in typing the early manuscript were Leanne Vissiers and Mark Brown. I wish to thank Sam and Sarah Groves who hosted me in their home in Durban, South Africa where this book had its first beginnings. Our dinner conversations brought much clarity to the Bible story. Lee Campbell was involved in the initial design and formatting process and must take the credit for what I think is a great looking cover. He has also helped in sharpening my understanding of some parts of this work. Gareth Gamble has performed most of the design and formatting for what you now see; constantly having to adapt things as the work grew, and patiently putting up with my endless changes. He has worked so diligently behind the scenes, and I am grateful to him for the hours (probably days!) that he has spent in front of a computer. Send me the bill from the optician! Keri McGregor, Joanne Kilpatrick, and Philip Saunders have been involved in the editing process at some stage, and if it were not for them, it would read a whole lot worse than it does. Any mistakes that do remain are really their fault as much as mine, but I'm not supposed to say that in the preface to a book. Tim and Lynn Anderson, David Gibson

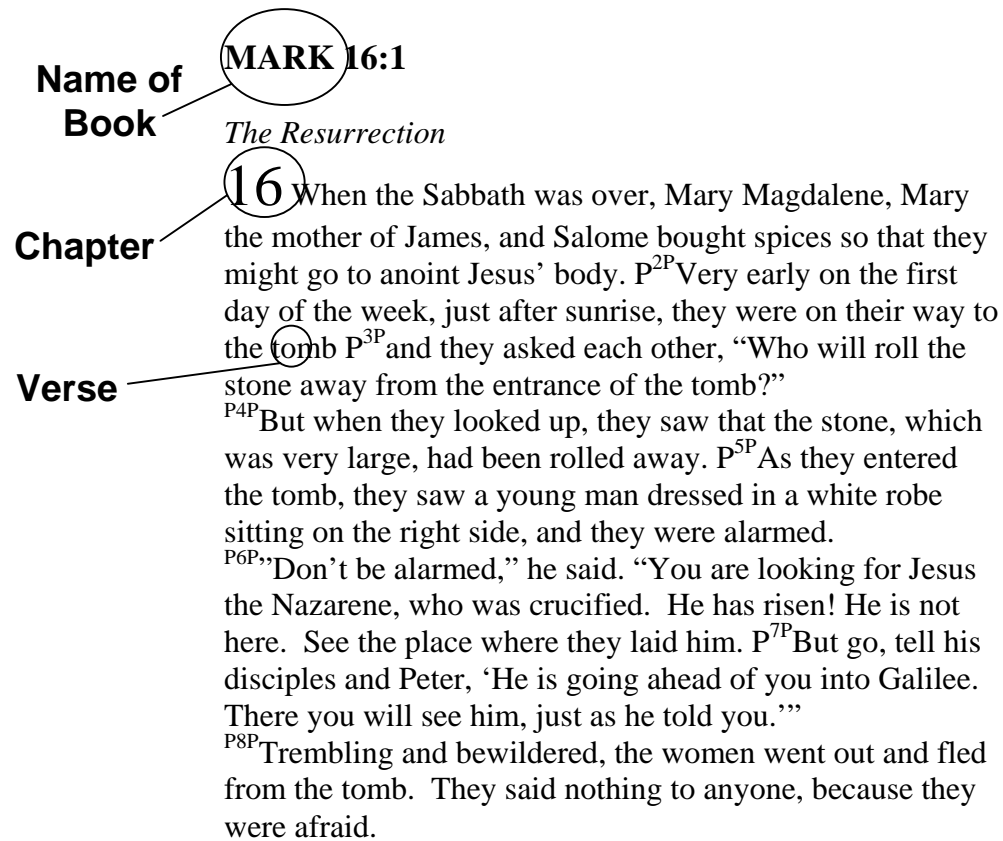
and Melvin Tinker have all provided clear and helpful feedback on the material at different stages, and I am indebted to them. I wish to thank Kaman Ng who has undertaken to translate the SOK Booklet into simplified and traditional Chinese, along with Lynn Tok who has translated the SOK Power Point into simplified Chinese. These materials are available from www.sok.org.ukT. My thanks also go to Hilton McGregor who has been extremely kind to print this material at cost price, without which this book would not be in your hands.

Finally, but not least, I wish to thank my father and mother. God in his grace has granted me two of the greatest parents this world affords. They have not only provided me in life with more than I need, but they have modeled to me what it means to be a Christian; to know and live the gospel, not just write about it. Thank you for bearing with a son who was always in front of his laptop for the last couple of years!

Jonathan Gibson
Belfast, 2004

For God's glory alone.

Finding your Way Around the Bible



The title at the top of the page in the Bible is the name of the book. The large numbers are the chapter numbers. Chapters are divided into smaller parts called verses – these are the small numbers. To find a part of the Bible simply follow these three steps:

1. Name of the book (see Contents page at the beginning of the Bible for help)
2. Chapter – large number
3. Verse – small number

Exercise – try finding Mark 16:3 in your Bible

A Big Picture of the Bible Story

God's Kingdom

Constitution:
'I will be their God, they will be my people'

God's promises

	Place	People	Rule & Blessing	King
Creation	Eden	Adam & Eve	God's word	Adam

God's kingdom ruined

Abraham	Canaan	Abraham's family	God's promises	Kings from Abraham's family
Israel in desert	Tabernacle	Israel nation	God's rules	Tribe of Judah
Israel in Canaan	Temple in Canaan	Israel nation	God's rules	David, Solomon

God's kingdom ruined...again!

Israel in exile	Return to new temple in Canaan	Remnant	New covenant	A perfect king is promised
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Jesus

JESUS

The fulfillment of God's promises

The church	God's people are a living temple	People who have faith in Jesus	The Gospel	King Jesus
New creation	New heaven and new earth	Perfect people from every nation	God's everlasting rule & blessing	King Jesus

How to Use this Study Guide

Read with a Bible

The best way to use this book is with an open Bible. In order to help students understand the Bible and this book it is best to follow this simple format:

- Read the section of the Bible
- Explain any hard English words
- Ask questions to get them thinking towards the meaning of the Bible passage
- Read the summary statement in this book

Lessons

Throughout the book there are summary boxes to help remind students of the main lessons.

Every word of the Bible comes from God. The Bible is God speaking to us



Think it through & discuss

This section helps students think through main points of the passage and how they apply to us



The Story so Far...

These sections are inserted through out the book to remind students of the main points in the story of God's kingdom.