



## The Story so Far . . .

### **The Bible**

The Bible is God's book. God is the author of the Bible, but He used human beings to write it. Every word in the Bible comes from God. The Bible has one story – Jesus and His Kingdom.

### **The beginning of God's Kingdom**

In the beginning God created a perfect world. He created human beings (Adam and Eve) to be in a relationship with Himself and to obey His words. God had a special place called Eden where He lived with His people. In the beginning, God put His people in His place and asked them to obey His words. God had established a Kingdom - God's people, living in God's place, under God's rule and blessing.

### **The ruin of God's Kingdom**

An angel from heaven called Satan rebelled against God and was thrown out of heaven to the earth. He entered the Garden of Eden and tried to destroy God's Kingdom. God gave human beings the role of ruling the world, but they failed in a big way. They wanted to be their own rulers, deciding for themselves what is right and wrong. They listened to Satan and rejected God's authority and His loving rule. The result was a broken relationship with God and the Kingdom was ruined.

### **God's punishment**

God judged human beings and threw them out of His place and did not let them go back into the Garden of Eden. The punishment was a broken relationship with God and with each other. Death entered the world. The Kingdom God had established was ruined.

### **God's promise**

But God also acted in grace and promised a Rescuer-Ruler who would come and defeat Satan and rebuild God's Kingdom. The Rescuer-Ruler would come from the family line of Adam and Eve and rescue people back into the Kingdom of God. The rest of the

Bible is the progressive story of how the promised Rescuer-Ruler will come and establish God's Kingdom.

### **A new beginning**

In the story of Cain and Abel we saw that human rebellion had been passed on to the whole human race. We all die because we have all chosen to be the rulers of our own lives. However, human rebellion increased to the point where God decided to judge the world. In the flood God re-created the world and gave human beings a new beginning. By saving Noah He showed His commitment to restoring His Kingdom through the promised Rescuer-Ruler.

### **Human rebellion again**

But things soon went wrong again. People disobeyed God's words to populate and fill the earth. They tried to stay in one place and build a city for security and a tower for their own religion. Like Adam and Eve they tried to become like God, and make a name for themselves. God judged them by confusing their language, scattering people over the whole earth. God's purposes were still fulfilled.

### **The promised Kingdom**

God's response to the rebellion at Babel was to choose a man called Abraham. God graciously promised him three things: a land, a people, and a blessing. God was re-establishing His Kingdom through the family of Abraham – God's people, living in God's place, under God's rule and blessing. God tested His own Kingdom promises by asking Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham obeyed God, but just before he was about to kill Isaac, God provided a substitute sacrifice in order to keep His Kingdom promises.

### **From slavery to service**

God's promises to Abraham involved his children living in a foreign land as slaves for 400 years. Through Joseph God's people went to live in Egypt and after some time they became slaves to Pharaoh, king of Egypt. God then sent Moses to Egypt to rescue His people, but Pharaoh refused to let them go. So God fought for His people as the Warrior-King against Pharaoh and destroyed their enemy. God then brought Israel to Mount Sinai where He gave them His rules. He was now their King and so they could not

live any way they wanted. Israel was to live in obedience to God, and so like Adam, be a priest to the world. Through Israel God would rule and bless the world.

### **From Sinai to Canaan**

At Mount Sinai God instructed the people to build Him a tent. God's plan was to rescue back a people for Himself so that He could live with them. God was restoring His Kingdom – God's people, living in God's place, under God's rule and blessing. However, it was not long before Israel disobeyed God and broke the rules of the covenant. But God was able to keep the covenant going by graciously providing a sacrifice and a priest to help pay for the people's disobedience. When Israel reached the Promised Land they refused to enter it because they were scared of the people. God punished Israel for 40 years in the desert, yet He remained faithful and eventually brought their children to enter the land, along with Joshua and Caleb. Just before they entered the land Moses warned them: "If you obey, you will be blessed. If you disobey, God will punish you by removing you from the land."

### **From Canaan to exile**

Through Joshua's victories Israel inherited the land God promised to Abraham. During the first 350 years in the land judges ruled Israel. But the system was not working – Israel needed a king. God's Kingdom could not come until Israel had a king. Israel's first three kings were Saul, David and Solomon. Each of them was good in different ways, but they all failed and disobeyed God. After Solomon the kingdom declined, and eventually God removed the people from the land due to their disobedience. God's Kingdom was ruined again. However, all hope was not lost. God had promised David that from his family there would come a King, whose Kingdom God would establish forever. This King was the promised Rescuer-Ruler that was introduced at the beginning of the Bible.

### **From exile to Canaan**

Before, during and after the exile God spoke to His people through prophets. They were people called by God to speak God's words to His people. Their message was simple – Israel had sinned, God would remove them from the land. But they gave a message of hope – God would be faithful to His promises. He would bring a remnant back into the land. In particular God promised a new

covenant, one in which He would change the human heart to obey His laws, and also in which He would forgive people's sins forever.

When God's people arrived back in the land there was great expectation for the restoration of God's Kingdom. The temple and the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt. However, the people's hearts had not changed and they soon disobeyed God's rules again. God was going to come in judgement to His temple. We were left waiting for the promised Rescuer-Ruler who would finally change the hearts of God's people and restore the Kingdom. There were 400 years of silence and God's people still waited...

### **The Kingdom is near**

Jesus' birth was very unique because He had no human father and prophets predicted His birth 700 years before it actually happened. Jesus is the long promised King from David and Abraham's families, and His name "Jesus" identifies Him as the promised Rescuer-Ruler. Jesus overcame Satan in the desert and so proved himself as the final obedient Son who could establish God's Kingdom. Where Adam and Israel failed Jesus did not fail, but proved himself as the perfect Son. His message was simple: "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is here". The reason the Kingdom had arrived was because the King was now here. Jesus demonstrated His authority as God's King through His miracles. He showed God's rule over Satan, sickness, sin and creation.

Jesus taught in parables. These were challenging stories that communicated an important truth about the Kingdom of God. Jesus told various parables explaining that His Kingdom was here and that people should respond positively to it. Those who did not respond positively to God's King remained under His judgement.

### **The Kingdom has come**

Jesus was taken by His own people and put on trial for claiming to be God. The religious leaders wanted Him put to death, but Pilate the Roman Governor found Him innocent. However, in the end he handed Jesus over to be crucified. Jesus the innocent King died in the place of guilty rebellious people. Jesus was the innocent substitute who was punished by His Father instead of guilty rebellious people. Through His death Jesus provided a new relationship with God, which was available to everyone. Three days later Jesus rose from the dead.

Through His death and resurrection Jesus defeated Satan and therefore established God's Kingdom – the new age when God's people would live in God's presence, under His rule and blessing. When Jesus ascended to heaven He sent His promised Holy Spirit, which was a fulfilment of God's Kingdom promise to live among His people and be their God. The new covenant had come. God's Kingdom was now here. The constitution of God's Kingdom is – "I will be their God, they will be my people". God's people now live in God's presence, under His rule and blessing because of what Jesus has done for them. A new way has been opened through Jesus so that people can live with God again. Jesus is now the new priest-King who rules God's world from heaven waiting to defeat all His enemies.

### **The completed Kingdom**

Before Jesus left the earth He promised that He would return. It would be good news for His followers, but bad news for everyone who had refused to submit to His rule and accept His offer of forgiveness through His death and resurrection. When Jesus does return He will bring in a new creation. God's Kingdom will then finally be completed – God's people, living in God's place, under God's rule and blessing. God will rule from His throne; He will live among His people and be their God, and they will be His people. This means that God will have a perfect relationship with His people forever. Satan and all the bad things that he brought into the world will be finally removed from the new creation.

### **God's Kingdom and us**

Jesus is King of God's world and because He is God's appointed judge everyone will meet him one day. And so we all have a choice – will Jesus be our Saviour and King, or our Judge? To have a right relationship with God and enter His Kingdom we trust Jesus as the one who receives our punishment, and who provides the perfect life we need. The Christian life is best life because we live in our Father's world as He intended. But is also the most difficult life as it involves suffering for Jesus. We suffer because He suffered.

<b>God's Kingdom</b>				
<i>Constitution: 'I will be their God, they will be my people'</i>				
<b>God's promises</b>				
	<b>Place</b>	<b>People</b>	<b>Rule &amp; Blessing</b>	<b>King</b>
<b>Creation</b>	Eden	Adam & Eve	God's word	Adam
<b>God's Kingdom ruined</b>				
<b>Abraham</b>	Canaan	Abraham's family	God's promises	Kings from Abraham's family
<b>Israel in desert</b>	Tabernacle	Israel nation	God's rules	Tribe of Judah
<b>Israel in Canaan</b>	Temple in Canaan	Israel nation	God's rules	David, Solomon
<b>God's Kingdom ruined...again!</b>				
<b>Israel in exile</b>	Return to new temple in Canaan	Remnant	New covenant	A perfect King is promised
<b>Jesus</b>	<b>JESUS</b> The fulfilment of God's promises			
<b>The church</b>	God's people are a living temple	People who have faith in Jesus	The Gospel	King Jesus
<b>New creation</b>	New heaven & new earth	Perfect people from every nation	God's everlasting rule & blessing	King Jesus

