

# The Big Picture

*An overview of the message of the Bible  
12 weeks*

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# The Big Picture

## Contents

<b>Study</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
1	The God who has a plan	3
2	The God who made the world	5
3	The God who will re-make the world	7
4	The God who makes promises	9
5	The God who rescues Israel	11
6	The God who makes a deal with Israel	13
7	The God who will send a great King	17
8	The God who will send a good shepherd	19
9	The God who will deal with rebellion	21
10	The God who will send a suffering servant	23
11	The God who fulfils His promises	25
12	The God whose Son is all we need!	27

# The Big Picture

## Group Members' Studies

### Why do The Big Picture?

The Big Picture is intended for those who are eager to know God better. The aim of the course is to help us better know the one God and His one overarching plan for the world. All of us will have difficulty in understanding some parts of the Bible. It is easy to stick to familiar passages in order to ignore such problems, but if the Bible is God's word then we need to read it and understand it. And to do so, we need to step back and see how the Bible fits together into one coherent whole.

If you were to visit a city for the first time and ask someone to show you the most famous city building, it would be of little help if they began by showing you only the detail of a cornice or a door handle without first enabling you to see the whole building from an appropriate distance. In the same way, to understand the Bible correctly we need to see it's big picture or main storyline. Without the big picture, we lack the context for any part of the Bible – we don't know where we are in the overall plan of God. With the big picture, we know where we are and can therefore make more sense of what is happening. We wouldn't think of opening a novel in the middle and trying to understand the events taking place. To do so risks missing the point of what is happening; the same is true of the Bible. The Big Picture will help us to work out the major things God wants us to know in His overall message – what is His plan for all history? How does Jesus fit in? What is God like?

This will deepen our understanding of God and the gospel and will change the way we think about who we are, why we're here, and where we're going. The Big Picture will give us God's view of things – do we need any better reason?

### How to make the most of The Big Picture

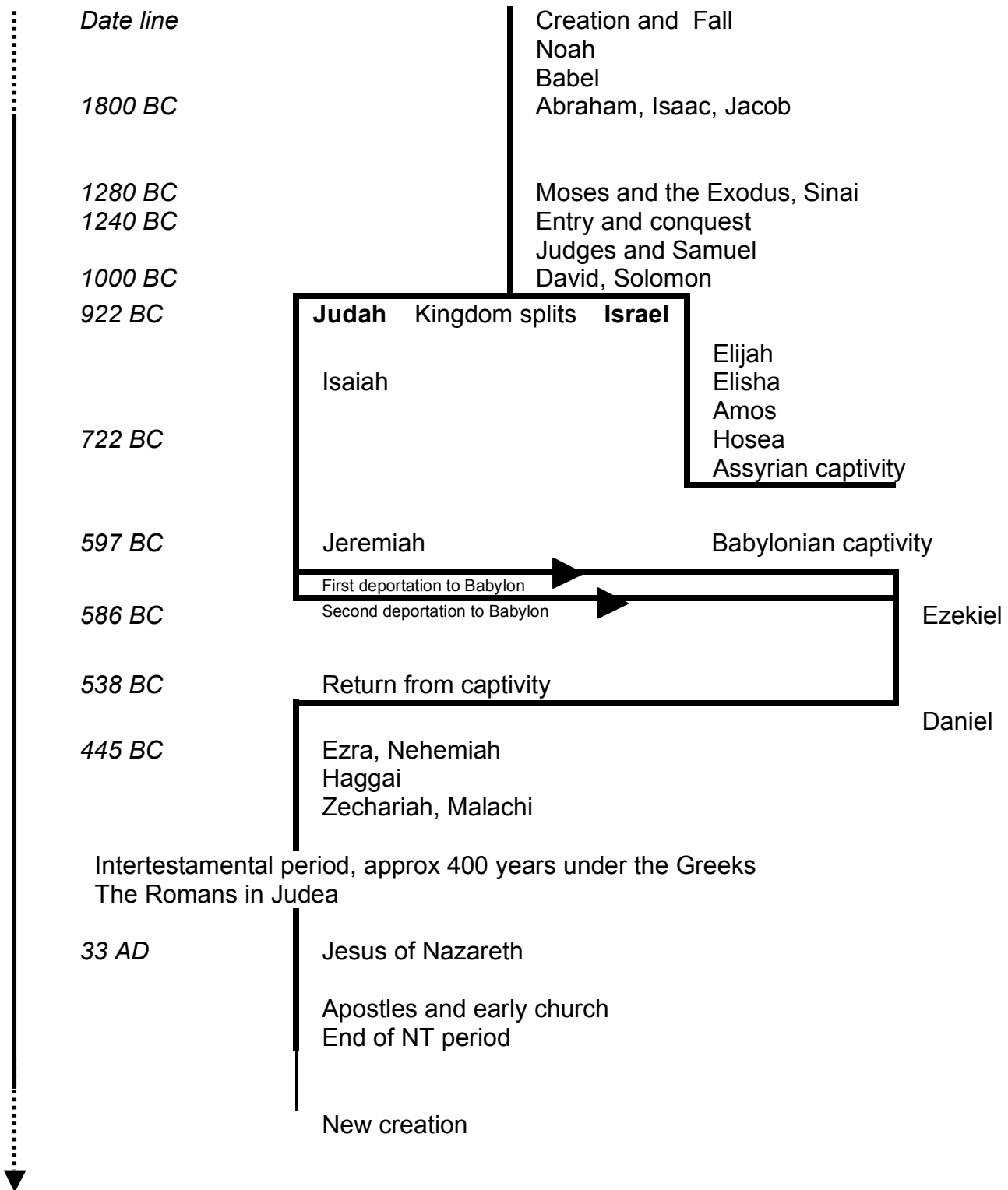
You will see that there are twelve studies. It would be a great help if you read the relevant passage(s) and attempted to answer the suggested questions yourself before the group meets. This way you will get more out of each session and will enable others to think as you make your contributions during the discussion.

In addition to preparation it is a real help to be present for each session. While this is true of any bible study, it is all the more so for an overview of the Bible given the amount covered in each session.

Finally, while your preparation for, and presence at, each session will help, prayer is vital. As the Bible is God's word, we need to be asking God to open our eyes to what He is saying to us as we study the Bible – both on our own in advance and together as we meet. Three pointers to get the most out of The Big Picture: prepare, be present, and pray.

# The Big Picture

## Time Line of the Bible



**The God Who Has a Plan**  
**Ephesians 1**

**For Starters**

1. How do you view God? Do you view Him as having a plan? If so, what would you say his plan is?

**Investigate**

1. Read Ephesians 1:1-14. List all the things that God has done for us. Why do you think Paul mentions so many blessings in this section?
2. What is God's plan (1:3-14)? Why is God seeking to achieve this plan? (1:6,12,14)
3. What is God the Father's part in the plan and what is Jesus' role? What does this teach us about God the Father and Jesus?
4. Read Ephesians 1:15-19. What does Paul pray for? How do you think his prayer follows on from his explanation of God's plan in 1:3-14?

# The Big Picture

# Study 1

5. Read Ephesians 1:19-23. What does this teach us about God's power? Why does Paul want the Ephesians to know and experience God's power (i.e. how does it relate to God's plan?)

## **Thinking it through**

1. Why is it hard to believe God has a plan and will accomplish it? Why is it often hard for Christians to believe they are blessed with every spiritual blessing?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. If Christ is at the centre of God's plans for everything, how should our priorities be shaped by 1:3-14?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How do our prayers compare to Paul's? What can we learn from Paul about prayer?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Why do you think we have studied Ephesians 1 at the beginning of the Big Picture course?

## **The God Who Made the World** **Genesis 1-3**

The Bible's account of God and His plan for eternity begins with God's creation of the world. However, the paradise that God originally created is ruined as early as Genesis 3 when humankind rebel against God, often known as the Fall. This is not the end of the story but really the beginning – the Bible is about what God does in response to the events of Genesis 3.

### **For starters**

1. If you were to go onto the street and do a survey, what words do you think people would use to describe God? Write a list.

### **Investigate**

1. Quickly read Genesis 1:1 – 2:3, noting down any words or phrases that are repeated. What are the main things we learn about God and the world?
  
2. What do we learn about humankind and our place in God's world? What is the order of authority that God establishes in the world (1:27-28)?

Read Genesis 2:4-25. What does this add to our understanding of God's purpose for humankind?

3. Read Genesis 3:1-24. What are Adam and Eve caused to doubt about God? In what way is Adam and Eve's behaviour typical of humankind's rebellion?

# The Big Picture

# Study 2

In light of Genesis 1-2, why is their rebellion so serious?

4. What are the main consequences of their rebellion:
  - immediately (3:1-13)? How does God's created order of authority (see question 2) change?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - as a result of God's judgment (3:14-24)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Is there any evidence of hope for humankind in Genesis 3?

## **Thinking it through**

1. How does Genesis 1-3 describe God? What words would you use to describe Him? How has your own thinking changed?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. 'I can't believe in God when the world is in so much of a mess.' How would you respond to this comment from your understanding of Genesis 1-3?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Read Colossians 1:15-16. What is Jesus' role in God's created world?



## **The God Who Will Re-Make the World** **Revelation 21 - 22**

The Bible's account of God and His plan for eternity begins with God's creation of the world in Genesis 1-2. God's sheer greatness and power is breathtaking as He creates everything from nothing and simply by speaking. God's created world is very good and, although God is in charge of His world, His rule over His creation is delegated to humankind.

However, God's paradise is ruined in Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve are seduced by the serpent into doubting God's word and God's goodness. The heart of their rebellion is that they long to be like God (Genesis 3:5) which is both scandalous (as God is the creator and ruler of the world) and foolish (as humankind is not like God). Mankind's rebellion leads to a terrible judgment from God – all of creation is cursed, mankind's relationship with God is ruined and relationships between people are ruined. The only glimmers of hope are God's promise that the serpent will one day be crushed (3:15) and God's continued provision of good things to Adam and Eve (3:21).

The rest of the Bible can be viewed as God putting right what went wrong at the Fall. In fact, God is going to do more than simply restore the paradise of Eden. God will create a wonderful new heaven and new earth far superior to Eden. Revelation 21 – 22 is the best glimpse of God's new creation.

### **For starters**

1. What are your main aims and goals in life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What is your view of heaven? How does it affect the way you live?

### **Investigate**

1. Read Revelation 21:1 – 22:6. What will happen to the 'first' creation? What do you think this means?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. From what we saw in Genesis 3 (see Study 2), why does this have to happen?

# The Big Picture

# Study 3

3. Complete the table below to compare and contrast the situation in Genesis 3 with that in Revelation 21-22.

	<b>Genesis 3</b>	<b>Revelation 21-22</b>
<b>Relationship between God and Man</b>	Gen 3:6-13	Rev 21:3 & 22-26 & 22:4
<b>Land</b>	Gen 3:23-24	Rev 21:1-2 & 10-21
<b>Access to tree of life</b>	Gen 3:22	Rev 22:1-2
<b>Curse/sin</b>	Gen 3:1-5 & 14-19	Rev 21:27 & 22:3
<b>Blessings</b>	Gen 3:14-21	Rev 21:4

4. What is the significance of the similarities between the 'first' creation and the new creation? What is the significance of the differences?

## Thinking it through

1. What big questions are left unanswered after studying Genesis 1-3 and Revelation 21-22?
2. How has this passage challenged your view of what heaven (i.e. God's new creation) is like? How should it change the way you live?
3. Are we told anything about Jesus' role in the new creation in Revelation 21-22? Who else (apart from God) is mentioned?

## **The God Who Makes Promises** **Genesis 12, 15, 17**

God's plan for the whole of history is not simply to put right what went wrong at the Fall and to rescue his people from this fallen world. God will create a wonderful new heaven and new earth far superior to Eden.

The new creation is pictured in Revelation 21-22 as a stunning and secure city without any rebellion (21:27) or the consequences of such rebellion (21:4). The people of God have access to the Tree of Life which was out of their reach after the Fall and we are specifically told that 'no longer will there be any curse' (22:3). Even more wonderful, however, is the picture of restored relationship between God and His people (21:3) who will be gathered from all nations (21:24-26).

God begins to promise how He will achieve His plan in Genesis 12-17. This set of promises is one of the key turning points in the Bible.

### **For starters**

1. What are the various means by which the world can be made into a better place, according to what people generally think?
  
2. What questions are left unanswered after looking at Genesis 1-3 and Revelation 21-22?

### **Investigate**

1. Read Genesis 12:1-7. What are the main things that God promises Abram (later called Abraham) in these verses?
  
2. Read Genesis 15:1-7 and 17:1-8. What are the key additional promises God makes in these verses?
  
3. Complete the table on the next page to relate the promises of Genesis 12-17 with the events of Genesis 3.

Genesis 3	Genesis 12-17
Relationship between God and man ruined	
Thrown out of Eden	
No access to tree of life (death introduced)	
Presence of sin and curses	
No significant blessings	

What does this teach us about what God is beginning to do?

4. What does Abraham have to do to get these promises (see 15:8-21)?
  
5. How does Abraham respond to the promises (see 12:1-9 and 15:1-6)? How is he different from Adam and Eve in Genesis 3?

What does 12:10-20 reveal about Abraham and why do you think the Bible wants us to know about this side of his character?

**Thinking it through**

1. To what extent are the promises to Abraham fulfilled in the new creation described in Revelation 21-22?
  
2. How has this passage challenged your view of what faith is?
  
3. Read Galatians 3:6-9, 14. How do Genesis 12-17 and Galatians 3 change our view of what Jesus came to do? What relevance are these promises to us?

## **The God who Rescues Israel** **Exodus 12**

At the start of the Bible, God creates the world and sets apart mankind to enjoy relationship with Him and to look after His creation. However, mankind rebel against their creator and, as a result, suffer God's right anger and punishment (Genesis 3). They face toil, enmity, death and separation from God. Rebellion remains an ever-present problem from Genesis 3 onwards – even flooding the whole world and starting afresh with the most righteous man, Noah (Genesis 6), deals with neither rebellion nor death. Something altogether different is required before the Fall can be reversed and the new creation (Revelation 21-22) can come about.

We looked at one of the key turning points in the Bible in Study 4, Genesis 12-17. God promises that He Himself will act to reverse the effects of the Fall. God promises Abram (later called Abraham): many descendants, a land in which to dwell, blessing for himself and other nations, and a relationship with God.

However, the early chapters of the book of Exodus begin with such thoughts a million miles away. Although the Israelites are numerous, they are in slavery in Egypt.

### **For starters**

1. Read Exodus 2:23-24; 3:15-17. What does God plan to do and why?
2. Skim read Exodus 3-11. List the main things that happened in the run up to Exodus 12.

### **Investigate**

1. Read Exodus 12. From what 2 things are Israel rescued in chapter 12? Why are both necessary?
2. How does God accomplish each of the rescues referred to in question 1? How does the Passover lamb avert God's judgment?

3. What is Israel rescued for? (6:8, 7:16, 8:1, 9:1, 12:25). Why are both of these significant?

What else does the passage teach us about the subject of God's rescue of His people? (e.g. 9:4-7, 14-16)

4. How is Israel to remember these events? (12:14-20, 24-27; 13:1-16) Why does she need to remember? (12:24-27; cf 3:15, 6:6-8).

## **Thinking it through**

1. The Passover is used in the Bible as a pattern of God's ultimate rescue of humankind. From studies 1-4, what parallels are there between God's rescue of Israel here and His rescue of humankind after the Fall? (Think about why God rescues them, from what they're rescued, and the manner in which the rescue takes place).
2. What questions are still left unanswered?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 5:7. How does the Bible view Jesus' role in God's rescue of humankind?

## **The God who Makes a Deal with Israel** **Exodus 19, Deuteronomy 28, Jeremiah 11**

Although God has promised in Genesis 12-17 to reverse the effects of the Fall, the situation in Exodus 1-11 looked bleak. Israel were hardly a nation and, although they were numerous, they were slaves in Egypt to Pharaoh. However, God heard their crying and remembered His covenant with Abraham (Exodus 2:23). God called Moses and revealed to him the God that He is and the rescue He was about to bring about. The rescue of Israel from Egypt (known as the Exodus) is very significant as it provides a pattern which teaches us much about how God ultimately rescues humankind.

Exodus 12 teaches that God rescues His people from slavery and judgment by punishing His enemies. God does so through the death of a substitute Passover Lamb whose blood marks them out as God's people. And God rescues His people for relationship with Himself. So significant are these things that Israel is told again and again to remember lest she forget her rescue and...her God!

### **For starters**

1. How do people like to think they can get to heaven?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How would you sum up the promises made to Abraham? What was distinctive about them?

### **Investigate**

1. Read Exodus 19:1-8. How does God offer to bless Israel? What do the terms in 19:5-6 mean?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What must Israel do to obtain this blessing? How does this differ from the promises made to Abraham (Genesis 12-17)? How do the Israelites respond?

# The Big Picture

# Study 6

God unpacks this agreement with the Israelites several times. Read Deuteronomy 28:1-14 and 28:58-68.

3. What are the main way in which Israel will be rewarded if she obeys God? (Deut 28:1-14) How do these rewards compare with the promises made to Abraham?
4. What are the main ways in which Israel will be punished if she disobeys God? (Deut 28:58-68) How do these compare with the promises to Abraham?

Let's sum up so far, what will happen if Israel obey/disobey the Mosaic covenant?

5. Read Jeremiah 11:1-11. What is the prophet's charge against Israel? Why is this so serious?
6. What do these passages tell us about how the promises to Abraham will / will not be obtained?

## **Thinking it through**

1. What were the consequences of this failure to obey for Israel? (See 2 Kings 25)
2. How does it challenge our thinking today about God and about how we can get to heaven?



# The Big Picture

## The Story So Far...

God's plan is to bring everything under Jesus' rule for God's glory and praise (Ephesians 1). However, after 6 studies this looks a long way off. God's perfect world is ruined by humankind's rebellion and humankind have been punished by God by being judged and ejected from His presence (Genesis 1-3). However, God promises not simply to reverse the effects of the Fall but to bless Abraham's descendants with a land of their own and a relationship with the living God (Genesis 12-17). God shows that Israel's captivity in Egypt will not prevent His plan from being fulfilled as He powerfully rescues her from slavery and from His mighty judgment on the Egyptians (Exodus 12).

In study 6, we looked at the 'Mosaic' covenant that God inaugurated at Mount Sinai and that established the terms of Israel's relationship with God for the rest of the Old Testament. It is as foundational as the promises to Abraham in Genesis 12-17, though in a different way. A grasp of it is essential if we are to understand both the Old Testament and what Jesus came to do.

The promises in the Mosaic covenant deal with the same issues as the promises to Abraham, i.e. relationship with God, a land, blessing and a great nation. However, they are explained in greater detail and actually offer much more than Genesis 12-17 indicated. However, the most important feature of the Mosaic covenant is that it is conditional. Israel will only obtain the promises if she obeys God's commandments. If she disobeys God then she will face God's anger and be punished. We last saw her, in Jeremiah 11, clearly disobeying and in breach of the covenant and awaiting imminent judgment from God.

A good and strong leader will help to prevent Israel rebelling too much. However, the people cry out for a King, not to help them be more obedient, but so that they can be like the other nations. First Saul, then David become King. David is Israel's greatest King in the Old Testament. He subdues Israel's enemies within Canaan and fully conquers the land. In David's reign and that of his son, Solomon, Israel gets closer than at any time to obtaining what God has promised. However, this relatively happy time does not last and does not result in God's promises being properly fulfilled because Israel still keeps rebelling against God. Even David and Solomon sin. Importantly, God makes a covenant with David, promising that his descendant will help Israel to do what is right and will actually succeed in accomplishing what is necessary for God's promises to be fulfilled (see 2 Samuel 7).

The story of the next 400 years (2 Samuel 8 – 2 Kings 25) is of how the promised King does not appear. As a result of her rebellion, Israel ends up in a position worse than she was before the exodus.

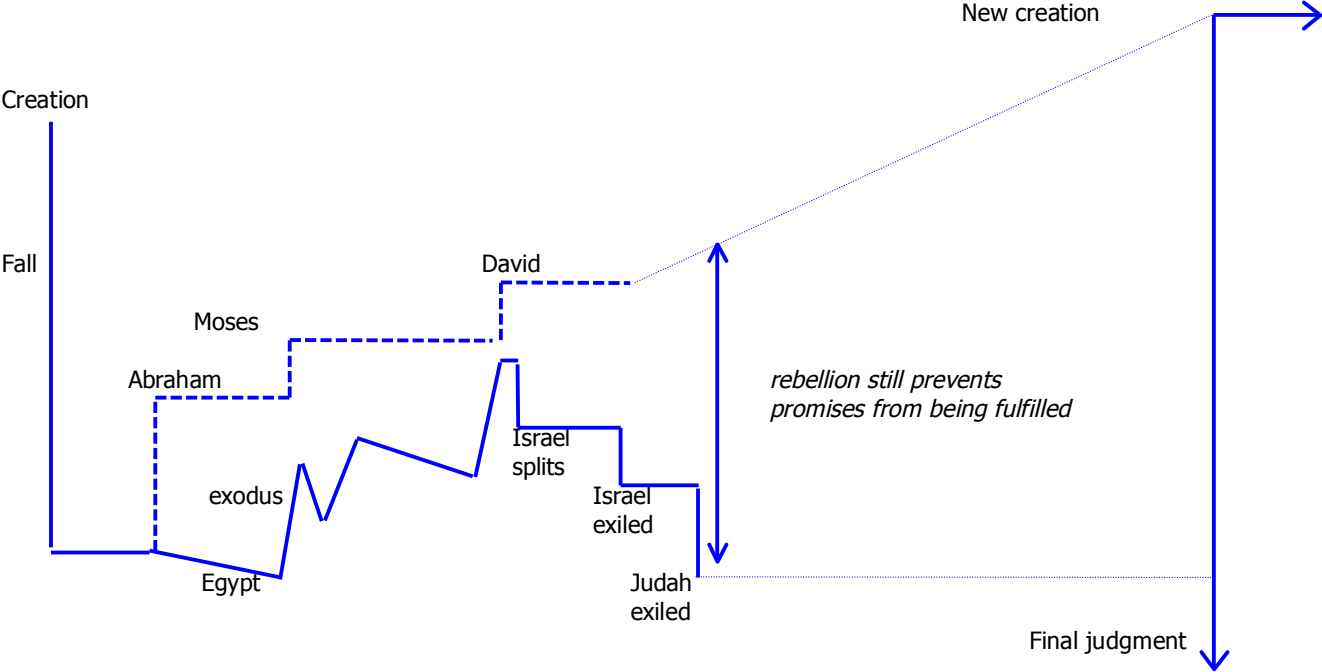
Three principle disasters occur (see the Time Line of the Bible on page 2):

- In 922 BC, the Kingdom of Israel splits into two – the northern Kingdom (called Israel - but also referred to as Ephraim and Samaria) and the southern Kingdom (called Judah). Judah contains the Davidic monarchy, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple.

# The Big Picture

- In 722 BC, Assyria, the emerging superpower in the area, conquers the northern Kingdom and the survivors disappear (2 Kings 17). Assyria invades Judah but does not succeed in destroying her (2 Kings 18-19); and
- Then in 586 BC, Babylon conquers Judah and takes her into exile (2 Kings 25).

God's plan now looks like this:



## **The God Who Will Send a Great King** **Isaiah 11**

God is revealing most about His plans for His people as He warns Israel of impending judgment (e.g. Jeremiah 11). God reaffirms that He will, nevertheless, rescue her and fulfil what He promised Abraham. For example, God sends the prophet Isaiah to speak to Judah revealing some key truths about what He is doing between the time of Assyria's conquest of the northern Kingdom and Babylon's conquest of Judah.

### **For starters**

1. If a friend who hadn't done The Big Picture course asked you, 'What's the Old Testament all about?', what would you say?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Think back to before you started The Big Picture. In what ways is your answer different now to what it would have been back then?

### **Investigate**

1. Read Isaiah 11. List the main things promised in this chapter.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What is God promising in 11:1-5? What are we told about the coming King? (N.B. Jesse was David's father)?

3. What does Isaiah 9:6-7 add to the promises of Isaiah 11:1-5?
4. What is God promising in 11:6-9? What does this mean? Why is this important?
5. What is the main thing promised in 11:10-16? Why is the imagery used in verses 15-16 significant?

### **Thinking it through**

1. Imagine you were asked to write a press release on the arrival of the person in chapter 11. What would you say?
2. What do you look for in an ideal world? From Isaiah 11, what is God's ideal world like? Can you imagine such a world ever existing? If not, why not? If so, when?
3. If you long for God's ideal world, how is it going to affect your life here and now?

## **The God Who Will Send a Good Shepherd** **Ezekiel 34**

God has made great promises to Abraham and his descendants but, at this point in their history, the people of Israel are miles away from enjoying them. However, Israel's failure to obey, subsequent exile and failure to inherit God's blessings is not going to stop Him from accomplishing His plan. Even as Israel is being judged, God sends his prophets to her to explain why the exile has come about and what will happen afterwards.

Through Isaiah, God tells the people that He will provide a King from David's line who will have God's Spirit (Isaiah 11:1-5) and will, in fact, be God Himself (Isaiah 9:6). This King will rule righteously and bring about an utterly amazing time of peace (Isaiah 11:6-9) reminiscent of the time before the Fall (Genesis 3). Not only that, but God's King will rule forever. This will be achieved by the King bringing the people back from exile (Isaiah 11:10-16) in an event like the original exodus from slavery in Egypt. This time, however, the fresh start will work as it will all depend on God Himself and He will do it.

### **For starters**

1. What do you look for in a leader? Write a CV for your chosen leader.

### **Investigate**

1. Read Ezekiel 34:1-10. What is God's complaint against the 'shepherds'?

What does God warn them He will do as a result of their actions?



## **The God Who Will Deal with Rebellion** **Ezekiel 36**

God has made great promises to Abraham and his descendants including the creation of a great nation ruled by a great King who would rule as no King had done before. However, in Ezekiel's time the people are in exile in Babylon. All seems lost. Yet God is still saying that He will fulfil His promises despite the apparent hopelessness of the situation.

In chapter 34 of Ezekiel, God promised to deal with Israel's bad leaders by replacing them and coming to shepherd His people Himself. God also promised to rescue Israel from exile and to destroy her enemies who want to prevent her from obtaining what God has promised.

In Ezekiel 36, God goes on to state how He will deal with the biggest problem – our rebellion against Him.

### **For starters**

1. Make a list of the main promises God has made so far?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What have you learned from the studies so far about how these promises will/will not be fulfilled?

### **Investigate**

1. Read Ezekiel 36:16-23. What have Israel done wrong?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What have been the consequences of Israel's rebellion? What, according to God, is wrong with such rebellion?

Why does the final consequence (36:20-23) concern God so much?

3. Read Ezekiel 36:22-38. Why will God rescue Israel? In what way does this rebuke them and in what way is it an encouragement? How does God's reasoning challenge our concerns and priorities?
4. List the 3 or 4 main elements of God's rescue (34:24-36). What is the main difference between the promised rescue and the original exodus? (See study 5). Why are these differences important?
5. What is the difference between the promise in 36:25 and the promise in 36:26-27? Why are both needed?

### **Thinking it through**

1. What would the people of Israel be like when the promises of Ezekiel 36 were fulfilled and why was this important?
2. Which of these promises have been fulfilled for Christians today and which have yet to be fulfilled? What implications does this have for the way we live our lives and what we are hoping for?



**The God Who Will Send a Suffering Servant**  
**Isaiah 53**

In Ezekiel 36, God promised that he would deal with the problem that has dogged humankind since Genesis 3 and the Fall – namely our rebellion against Him. God promised to cleanse His people from their past rebellion and give them a new heart so that they can obey Him in the future (36:25-27) – something that has seemed impossible until this point. Furthermore, God gives one of the clearest explanations in the Bible of why He will rescue – not for their sake but for the sake of His name, His reputation, among the nations (36:22-23, 32,36). This rebukes us for our man-centred thinking but encourages us because God says He will accomplish His plan (36:36).

However, we are not yet clear on how God will do this. We know He will send a great King to rule and that this King will be God Himself coming to rule. Furthermore, we know that God Himself will come as a good shepherd to rescue His people and that He will forgive our past rebellion. But, as yet, we do not know how God will deal with our rebellion so that we can be forgiven without His own character being compromised. How can God justly forgive rebels? In Isaiah 53, God explains that He will do so by sending a suffering servant.

**For starters**

1. Imagine you were to carry out a street survey asking people, ‘What is the world’s biggest problem?’. What answers do you think you would get?
  
2. In what different ways do people try and deal with such problems?

**Investigate**

1. Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12. What are the 3 or 4 main things the passage tells us about the servant? Have a go at subdividing the passage into its main sections and give each section a title that sums up its main point.
  
2. Read Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:1-9a; 50:4-8. What are the main things that these passages add to our understanding of the servant?

42:1-7	
49:1-9a	
50:4-8	

3. According to Isaiah 53, in what ways does the servant suffer? What do Isaiah 49:1-9a and 50:4-8 add to our understanding of his suffering?
  
4. According to 52:13 – 53:12, why does the servant suffer? Why is each of these significant?
  
5. What happens to the servant after his suffering? Why is each of these significant?

## **Thinking it through**

1. In what way does Isaiah 53 fit in with:
  - What we saw in Ezekiel 36?
  - What we've seen of God's plan in the studies so far?
  
2. How is the problem of humankind's rebellion dealt with according to Isaiah 53?
  
3. How should this passage have encouraged the Israelites in exile?
  
4. How should understanding this passage change our attitude towards:
  - What God is doing?
  
  - Jesus?
  
  - Ourselves?



## The Big Picture

## Study 11

3. What do the Jews mean when they call Abraham their father (Luke 3:8)? Why is John's response significant?
4. What is John doing in Luke 3:15-18? How will this prepare the way for Jesus? Why is it significant, given what we have seen in the studies so far, that Jesus will 'baptize with the Holy Spirit' (Luke 3:16, cf. Ezekiel 36)?
5. Read Luke 3:21 – 4:13. What is Jesus called in 3:21 – 4:13, and who else is called the same thing in these verses? What then is the significance of Jesus' behaviour in 4:1-13?
6. What is the main difference between Jesus' behaviour in Luke 4:1-13 and Israel's behaviour throughout the Old Testament? Why is the main difference between Jesus and both Adam and Israel so significant?

### **Thinking it through**

1. What does this passage teach about who Jesus is and what Jesus came to do?
2. How different is your answer now to what you thought before you studied The Big Picture? Do the differences matter? Why / why not?

## **The God Whose Son is All we Need!** **Hebrews 10:1-25**

Luke 3-4 demonstrated that Jesus is the long awaited rescuer. He is the true Son of God and he is able to resist temptation and to fully obey God. He has come to fulfil God's promises that were revealed throughout the Old Testament: to rescue His people, and forgive their rebellion and bring them to His new heaven and new earth.

However, the New Testament also demonstrates that, rather than stick with Jesus, God's people are often tempted to give up trusting in Jesus and his death as the fulfilment of all these promises. They are tempted to believe Jesus isn't quite enough – that while his death was helpful, more is required to bring about the fullness of all that God promised. Often this takes the form of believing that they need to continue trying to obey the demands of the Mosaic covenant in addition to following Christ.

The recipients of the letter to the Hebrews were tempted, probably because of persecution and pressure that was brought to bear, to return (or, possible, to turn) to Judaism. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews, like all other New Testament writers, urges them to persevere in Jesus and the gospel. He does so, primarily:

- by arguing that through Jesus comes God's revelation of Himself and His plan of salvation; and
- by explaining that Jesus is our great high priest.

Jesus can relate to those who are tempted and he has been chosen by God as the great high priest. Jesus is revealed in Hebrews 7 as the eternal high priest and, in Hebrews 8-9, as the minister of the new covenant and ministry – far superior to the old covenant system that he replaced. Jesus, unlike the old covenant ministers, entered heaven, set us free from sin, and inaugurated the new covenant (9:11-20). However, there was an even more significant difference.

### **For starters**

1. Sum up the big picture of the Bible from the studies so far.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Read Hebrews 10:1-25. How would you subdivide the passage? Give each section a title to sum up its main point.

### **Investigate**

1. Looking at Hebrews 10:1-4, what was the old covenant law not able to do and why? What was the point of the law according to Hebrews 10:1-4? (i.e. What was it meant to teach us?)

2. What was the problem with the sacrificial system from v5-10? What's the solution from v11-14? How does this section (10:5-10) follow on from 10:1-4?
3. What does the Holy Spirit tell us about Jesus according to 10:15-18? Sum up the main point of Hebrews 10:1-18. How do these verses (10:1-18) fit into what you have learned so far in The Big Picture?
4. Re-read 10:19-25. How does it follow on from 10:1-18?
5. What are the two great benefits of Jesus' death? List what Christians are called to do in response. What do these mean? Are Christians given any other reasons for doing these things?

### **Thinking it through**

1. How would describe what Jesus came to do? How has your understanding developed by doing The Big Picture?
2. How can we practically put Hebrews 10:19-25 into practice?
3. Why can we be confident that Jesus has done everything necessary to fulfil God's promises? When are we tempted to stop believing this? What would our lives look like if we lived as if we really believed Jesus is all people need?