

The Bible's Big Story.

25 lesson plans
written for Sudan,
plus a
'miming with actions'
summary to
teach and learn
using
words and actions



Answers
for the
'Stop and
discuss'
sections
are found
at the end
of each
lesson.

Written by Pastor Colin Salter
Edited Ruth Wall
Illustrated Jenny Nightingale

The Bible's Big Story.

A course of 25 lesson plans.

A 'miming with actions' summary
to teach and learn by words and actions.

Answers for the 'Stop and discuss' sections,
Are found at the end of each lesson.

2006

Written by Pastor Colin Salter
Edited by Ruth Wall
Illustrated by Jenny Nightingale
Photo 'School under the Tree' by Jimmy Cox

Course reference books:
The Good News Bible: United Bible Societies, 1994
MacMillan School Dictionary: Oxford 2004.

Introduction: A summary of **The Bible's Big Story** learned by words and actions

Page number: 3

Lesson Plans:

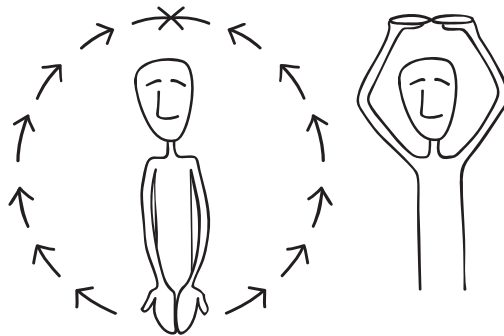
1. God is – Genesis	6
2. God creates – Adam and Eve	9
3. Mankind rebels	12
4. God judges by flood – Noah	15
5. God scatters all the people – Babylon	18
6. God calls his chosen person – Abraham	21
7. This special family move into Egypt – Joseph	23
8. God brings them out of captivity, after the Passover – Exodus and Moses	26
9. God gives the Law	30
10. Disobedience results in aimless wanderings	33
11. Entering the promised land – Joshua	36
12. Ups and downs under the leadership of Judges	40
13. A king is appointed – Samuel and Saul	44
14. The best times for Israel – David and Solomon	49
15. The prophets speak for God	53
16. The kingdom divided: the prophets continue but the people do not listen	57
17. Exiled into Babylon	61
18. After many years going back home – Ezra and Nehemiah	65
<u>(Silence: no lesson)</u>	
19. The birth of Jesus Christ – the Gospels	70
20. Jesus' life and teaching	74
21. Jesus' death and resurrection	79
22. The Christian church in Jerusalem – Acts and Peter	84
23. Persecution and the problems of growing – Paul	88
24. Spreading out to all peoples everywhere	92
25. God brings everything to its climax – John in Revelation	98

A Summary of The Bible's Big Story

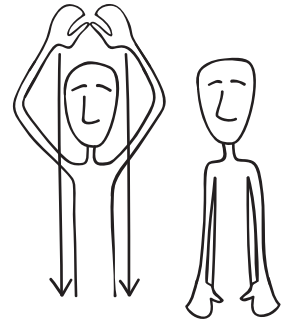
learned by words and actions



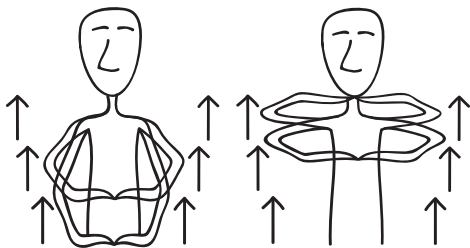
1. God is - Genesis
(point to heaven, right hand)



2. God creates - Adam & Eve
(circle of world, bottom up)



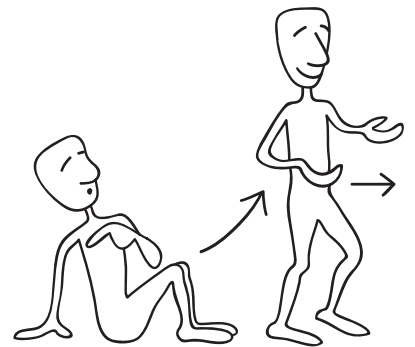
3. Humankind rebels
(hands fall together)



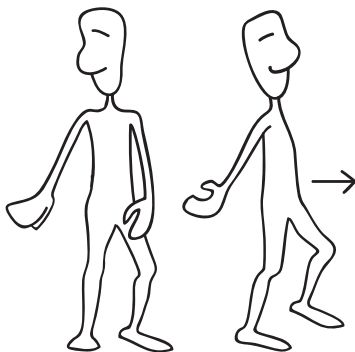
4. God judges by flood - Noah
(water rises up)



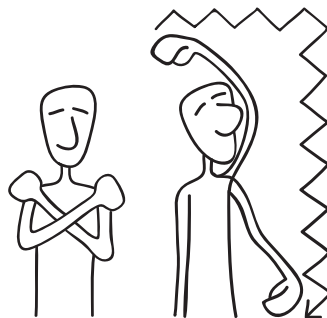
5. God scatters all the people - Babel
(arms up square top of tower, fall away down)



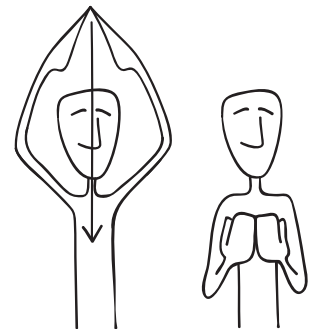
6. God calls chosen person - Abraham
(who me? point to self and get up)



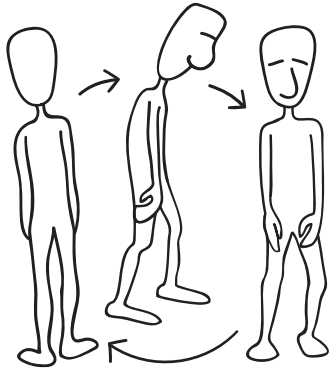
7. This continuing special family
move to Egypt - Joseph
(offer hands to children, walk off left)



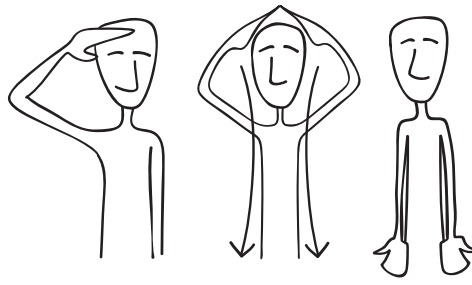
8. God brings them out of captivity
after the Passover - Exodus / Moses
(walk in, arms crossed, paint doorframes)



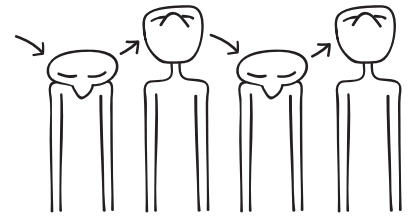
9. God gives the Law
(mountain, hands to open book)



10. Disobedience results in
aimless wanderings
(walk in circles)



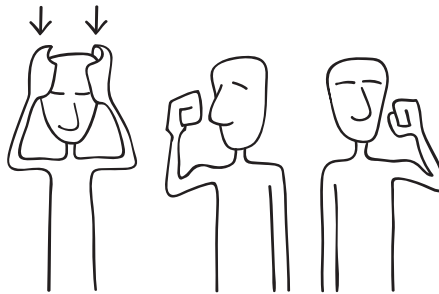
11. Entering the promised land - Joshua
(salute, Jericho's walls fall inwards)



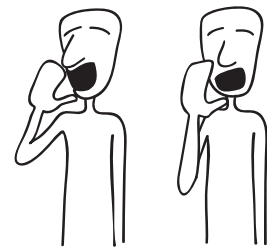
12. Ups and downs under the
leadership of Judges
(head bowed, head up repeated)



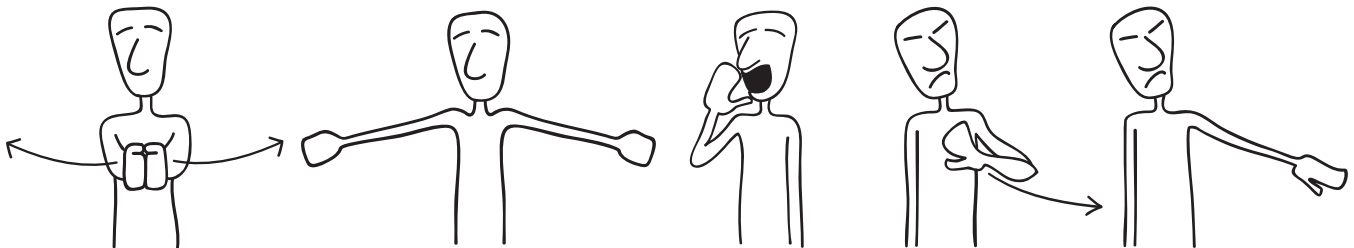
13. A king is appointed -
Samuel / Saul
(hands crown on head)



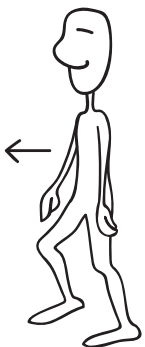
14. The best times for Israel -
David / Solomon
(crown again, strong arms muscle)



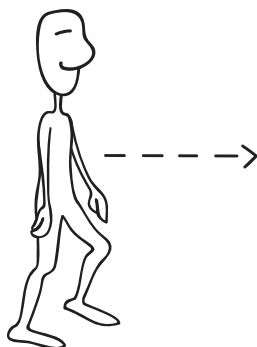
15. The prophets speak for God
(hands speak from mouth)



16. The kingdom divided - the prophets continue, but are largely ignored
(fists together, split open, - hands speak again, push away)



17. Exiled into Babylon
(walk out right)



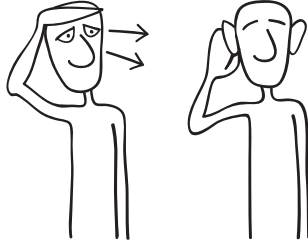
18. Years after, going back home -
Ezra / Nehemiah
(come back in gently)



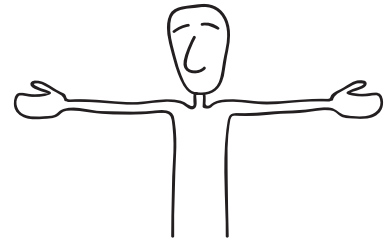
19. Silence
(head bowed)



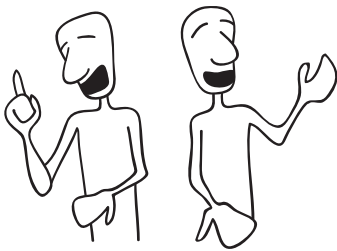
20. The birth of Jesus Christ
(rock baby in arms)



21. His life and teaching
(eyes shaded watching,
ears thumbbed to listen)



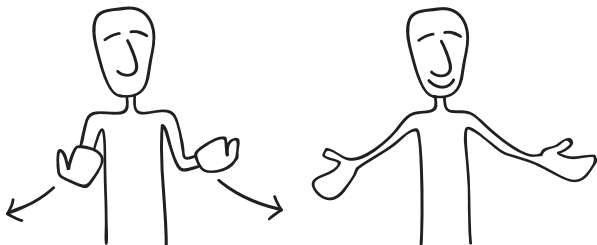
22. His death and resurrection
(hands outstretched in crucifixion)



23. The Christian church in
Jerusalem - Acts / Peter
(preaching to others)



24. Persecution and the problems of growing - Paul
(defend self from attack, fold arms, write letters)



25. Expansion to all peoples everywhere
(offer hands to everyone)



26. God brings everything to its
climax - Revelation / John
(point to heaven, right hand)

Lesson 1 **God Is.** (Six facts about our great Creator God).

Bible reference – **Genesis 1:1-26**

God has always lived. God never began and he will never end. God is much, much greater than any human person.

Stop and discuss (1) *Write a list of all the words describing a person as he or she grows from their birth until their death.*

We all begin life as babies. We grow into children who learn many things. As strong women and men we work hard. Then, after many years, we slow down. Our eyes may not see well. Our hair may become grey. One day we will die. God does not change at all. God will always be the same as he is. God will never die.

The Bible tells us the beginning of everything, but not the beginning of God. Read verse 1.

Before any other person was alive, God lived on his own. There was nothing except God anywhere. God himself was all that he needed to be.

Stop and discuss (2) *Who is the oldest person you know?*

What is the oldest thing you have ever seen?

Listen to Psalm 90:2 and repeat one or two words that tell us something about the age of God.

Starting with nothing at all, God made everything that there is.

God's words created. On day 1 God made Day and Night. On day 4 he put the sun, moon and stars into them.

On day 2 God made the sky above all of the waters. On day 5 he put birds and fish into them.

On day 3 God made the Earth, the land appearing from the sea. On day 6 he put animals and humans on to the land.

God gave the plants, the fish, the birds and the animals ways to reproduce themselves. God even made water purify itself by passing through the earth.

God is the great Creator. His words of command made everything to be. God makes all of nature that we see and enjoy today.

Stop and discuss (3) *We are learning how great God is.*

Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4 people.

What facts about God himself have we seen from these Bible verses today?

Which group can remember the most facts about God?

God wants to show himself to us. God wants us to know him. He is great, but he is not unknown.

The Bible word 'Genesis' means "origin" or "beginning". God started our world just as he wanted it to be. He had a plan for it all. We will see that plan as we go through this course.

God was pleased with his work. What does it say in verses 10, 12, 18, 21, and 25? God was happy. God's creation was all good. In every way it was what God wanted it to be.

On day six God said to himself, "Now we will make human beings", verse 26. This was his plan. God had made all that men and women need to live on, so everything was ready for the creation of human life.

Stop and discuss (4) Most things that people make have a purpose or a plan for their use.

What is the purpose of these five things?

1. a house
2. a T-shirt
3. a trap
4. a well
5. fire

What was God the Creator's plan in making our world?

Read Psalm 19:1-14, OT page 569, to find out God's plan.

Answers to 'Stop and Discuss'

1. Words describing the growth stages of human beings:

A baby, a child, a boy or a girl, a teenager, a young person, a youth, an adult, a man or a woman, an old person, a senior, an elder

2. Psalm 90:2 tells about God's age:

"eternally God"
"God for ever"

3. Facts we have seen about God from today's Bible verses:

1. God has always lived
2. God does not change
3. God lived alone before everything else
4. God did not need anything else
5. God spoke powerful words
6. God is the great Creator

4.
 1. a house is to live in
 2. a T-shirt is to wear
 3. a trap is to catch an animal, a bird or a person
 4. a well is for water
 5. fire keeps us warm, is for cooking, and may keep us safe

God's plan for the world is to give humans a place to live in and rule over.

This will show us his greatness and tell us that God is there.

God's words can be trusted, Psalm 19: 7.

God's laws are right, verse 8.

We should "reverence" (meaning 'think well of') God, verse 9.

God is more important than anyone or anything else. We show this as we praise him and thank him.

We must always speak and think about God in a good way, verse 14.

Lesson 2 **God Creates** – Adam and Eve

Bible reference – **Genesis 1:26 – 2:4.**

God's plan was to make a world ready for human beings to rule over, like a chief rules over his tribe or village. But before we see God creating mankind, there is one more important truth about God for us to try and understand by faith.

Genesis 1:26 is the first Bible reference to 'three persons in one God'. God clearly says: "Now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us". No-one else was there for God to talk with. So there must be more than one person in the one Creator God.

God is our maker. We do know many things about him. Yet there will always be some mystery about him, some things that we do not fully understand. This is one of the mysteries about God. It is very hard to explain.

The word 'Trinity' is not written anywhere in the Bible, but the idea of Trinity runs right through the Bible, starting from here. The Bible shows us that one God shows himself to always be three persons.

We all use water. We wash in water. We like to drink cold water, so we put ice into the cup. Ice is frozen water. In making tea, we boil water on the charcoal fire. We know the water is boiling when steam comes from the pot. Steam is water made into gas by boiling. Water can be water, or ice or steam. Three states of water. God is Father, God is Son and God is Holy Spirit. Three persons – one God. The difference between this example and God, is that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit *all at the same time*. Water can only be water, or ice, or steam, at any one moment of time. Water can change from being in one state into being in another as time passes. God is always the same. God does not change.

Stop and discuss (1) *Hebrews 11:3 says: "It is by faith we understand that the universe was created by God's word, so that what can be seen was made out of what cannot be seen".*

What does it mean: "by faith we understand"?

Does it mean 1, or 2, or 3 ?

1. *Does it mean we can understand every detail of creation?*
2. *Does it mean we can trust God for everything we cannot understand by ourselves?*
3. *Does it mean we can only believe what we can understand?*

Now let's get back to what this great God created!

Human beings were planned by God to be different from the rest of creation. They were to be in charge of all other created things, verse 28. For example, God wanted them to look after the animals using the plants he had made. He had made sure the different plants were there for their food. God wants human beings to work with creation. God made people and he made everything in the world to work together and so supply each other's needs.

God made humans like himself, verses 26, 27. A child may walk like his father, and may speak like his mother, and may look like his parents. In the same way human beings are in some ways like God.

More facts about day six of creation are seen in Genesis 2:7,8 and Genesis 2:21-25.

Stop and discuss (2) *From Genesis 1:26,27 and Genesis 2:7,8 can you find these words:*

1. God made human beings m_____ and f_____.
2. All people were made to be like G_____.
3. God used s_____ to make man.
4. God's own b_____ made mankind live.
5. God made Eve from the r_____ of Adam.

God was "very pleased" with all he had made, verse 31. The man and woman would have many children and live happily in the finished world God made for them to enjoy, Genesis 2:1. The Hebrew word 'adam' means "man, both male and female". It means 'humankind'. The first man and woman are named Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:20.

Day 7 God stopped creating new things, Genesis 2:2,3. God had made creation so that plants, animals, fish, birds and human beings were able to reproduce young like themselves. So God's world has kept on going from then right up until today.

Stop and discuss (3) *Here in class can you see any facts that prove God's creation is still at work? Can you think of any facts you have seen in the past day or two that prove God's creation is still at work?*

God made day seven holy, in a special way, Genesis 2:3. It was different to the six other days of creation. We can imagine God used that day to think deeply about his work. This gave him pleasure, Genesis 1:31. Today, we can use one day in every seven to think about God and this great world he has made for us to live in and enjoy.

Stop and discuss (4) *The fourth commandment in Exodus 20:8-11 tells us this one different day in seven is one of God's creation principles. Why do you think this is? (We will look at these commands later in our course).*

As people we make things for a purpose. Wood can be made into spears, a table or a fire. Leaves may make a shelter from the sun, a mat to eat from, or even tea to drink.

God has made humanity – he has made us – for two purposes. The first is to be in charge of his world. The second is to get to know, love and trust him as God over all.

Are you doing what God has made you to do?

Answers to 'Stop and discuss'.

1. Meaning number 2 is best. "We can trust God for everything we cannot understand for ourselves".

2. The Bible words are

1. male and female
2. God
3. soil
4. breath
5. rib

3. The fact we are living shows God's creation of men and women is still reproducing itself. All of the animals, fish, birds and plants we see show us God's creation is still working. The sun still shines during the day, the moon and stars are seen at night.

Thank God for his creation.

4. It is a day "dedicated to God", Exodus 20:10. It is a day for resting and relaxing from usual daily work. Your time can be used to think about God, and to think about his will and purpose for your life.
Praise God for who he is.

Lesson 3 **Mankind rebels.**

Bible reference – **Genesis 3:1-24.**

God had been very good, loving and kind to Adam and Eve. Yet the man and the woman he had created were not good to God! Genesis 3 tells us how they ignored God's plan. God's people chose to disobey God.

Verse 1 begins with "the snake". He was part of God's creation, Genesis 1:24. Later in the Bible he is said to be "the Devil", Revelation 12:9. In the Bible he is always against God. He is always trying to get people to follow his own ways and not obey God. Sometime in between the creation and Genesis chapter 3, the Devil was an angel who led a rebel movement fighting against God. He wanted to be on the top throne, and to be like God himself (see Isaiah 14:12-15, 2 Peter 2:4, and Jude verse 6). Here, he tries to get people to follow him.

In Genesis 3 there is a battle for the control of humankind. Adam and Eve were working the Garden of Eden, Genesis 2:15. They lived as God told them to, by eating the fruit of the land, Genesis 2:16,17.

Satan comes and questions what God has told Eve and Adam to do, verse 1. He also questions, in verses 4 and 5, why God would not allow them to eat from "the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad", Genesis 2:15. That tree was one of two that God had planted in the middle of the garden.

Stop and discuss (1) *In pairs, with each person finding **one** answer,*

1. What **two things** do you think Satan is trying to make Adam and Eve do by eating the fruit God told them not to eat?
2. What **two things** do you think Satan is doing to God's word, in verse 1, and in verses 4 and 5?

Eve listened to Satan and chose to forget God's rule. In chapter 3 verse 6 Eve also looked for a long time at the fruit she was not allowed to have. It looked really good! These two things were both in her mind. Yet her actions went against what she knew she should do. She ate the fruit God told her not to eat and she passed some of the fruit on to Adam, 3:6.

We know the Devil wanted to be like God, Isaiah 14:14.

Eve and Adam had the same strong feeling inside them. They were not willing to let God's word be their guide, or to let God be God! They 'sinned' by following their own way. ('Sin' is any rebellion against God and his will). They removed God's plan by putting their own idea into its place. Their lives were going to follow their own way, not God's way.

Stop and discuss (2). *Once Eve and Adam did not believe God's word was true, the Devil found it easy to stop them living God's way. When you were a young child, did you ever do something your parents (or your teacher) told you not to?*

When you were found out, what happened to you?

In Genesis 3:7 Adam and Eve knew for sure that they had done wrong. They realised God's word was true, see chapter 2 verses 16,17. The people became mortal, 6:3. They were not able to live forever. Their only feelings towards God were shame and sorrow. They tried to hide what they had done, but it was impossible.

Stop and discuss (3). *In the same pairs you were in earlier, can you now find three ways Adam and Eve tried to cover up the wrong they had done? Look in Genesis 3:7-13.*

Genesis 3:14-24 teaches us that sin – going against God's will – always brings bad results into the lives of people who do it. God said that Satan, the snake, would always crawl along the ground eating dust, verse 14. God said the woman would have more painful childbirth, verse 16. God said the man would have to work much harder to earn his living from the ground, verse 19. (Compare this with Genesis 1:11,12 and 2:8,9).

This whole event is often known as 'the Fall'. It is when humans fell away from being God's friends. From this time men and women would be living in rebellion, against God and against his will.

God sent Adam and Eve away from the beautiful Garden of Eden, chapter 3 verse 23. He set special guards to stop any way back, verse 24. All of this was part of God's judgement. It was God's solemn response to mankind's disobedience. Not only had humans broken their friendship with God, but also all of creation was now broken. The world was no longer perfect.

It would be very sad if the Bible story ended here. Happily it does not!

Stop and discuss (4) *There are three clues we are given in these verses that give us reason to hope in God even though we are part of humankind that is under God's judgement.*

Can you find all three of them?

1. Genesis 3:15 God promised an o_____ of the
w_____ would crush the h_____ of the s_____.
2. Genesis 3:21 God c_____ Adam and Eve with
a_____ s_____ (which means blood was shed).
3. Genesis 3:24 God blocked the way to eating the fruit of the t_____
that gives l_____, so that humanity would **not** live forever as
'sinners'.

Answers to Stop and discuss.

1. 1. 1. to disobey God
2. to obey himself (Satan)
1. 2. 1. to doubt God's word
2. to deny the truth of God's word

2. I took my brother's new watch, without him saying that I could. I wore it to school and showed it off as if it was mine!

My dad punished me with a beating. And, the next day at school all my friends knew what I had done and they laughed at me.

3. 1. they sewed leaves to try and cover themselves, Genesis 3 verse 7
2. they tried to hide from God among the trees, verse 8
3. they each blamed someone else for their own wrongdoing, verses 12,13.
4. 1. offspring woman, head snake, 3:15
2. clothed, animal skins
3. tree life

Lesson 4 **God judges by the flood – Noah.**

Bible reference – **Genesis 6-9.**

The human race chose to obey *some* of God's will but not *all* of it:

- They spread out the world over, Genesis 1:27,28; and 6:1.
- But they did not keep sexually pure as God wanted them to be, "one man with one woman" (singular) in Genesis 2:18, 22, 24. Lamech married two women, 4:19. By 6:2 "they took the ones they liked", or as another translation says, "they married any they chose". (NIV).

Around 2000 years passed. God the Creator was so sad with the bad choices people were making. People thought only to please themselves, not to please God.

Genesis 6 verses 7 and 13 are solemn words. God decided to destroy almost all of the human race. He would send a flood. Water would cover the earth, even the highest mountains, verse 17. This was God's judgement on people because of their sin.

God had every right to do this to everything he had made *because he was the Creator* of everything!

Stop and discuss (1) *Three words describe the moral character of most people in Genesis 6:1-13.*

1. What are those words? w_____ ()
 e_____ ()
 v_____ ()

Write (at the end of each word) how many times you can find it in verses 1-13.

Even if people ignore God, God does not ignore them. God saw the wicked actions and evil thoughts of people, 6:12. He also saw that one man, Noah, was different to the others, verse 8.

God told Noah what he was going to do. Because Noah walked through life with God, God could easily talk to him. God's plan was to save Noah and his family from the flood.

God made the first of several 'covenants', verse 18. (The Good News Bible word list, page 364, defines 'covenant' as "an agreement between God and a person, or group of people"). Noah and his family would be saved from God's judgement by obeying God's command. The command was to build a boat, verses 13,14.

The boat must be made strong enough to float. It had to be made big enough to house Noah's family plus a male and female of every kind of animal and bird, verses 19,20. God also reminded them to take enough food for all of them to eat and to live for a long time.

Stop and discuss (2) Here is a sum for you to do!

The answers are all in Genesis chapters 6 and 7.

Divide into groups of four people and work out the answers, before adding up the sum.

1. How many metres long was the boat to be built? _____ 6:15
2. How many decks (floor levels) were there on the boat? _____ 6:16
3. How many days and nights would God make rain fall on the earth with no stopping? _____ 7:4
4. How many years old was Noah when the flood came? _____ 7:6
5. On which day of the second month did the water start to fall and to flood? _____ 7:11
6. About how many metres above the mountain tops did the flood rise to? _____ 7:20
7. For how many days did the water cover the earth before it started to go down? _____ 7:24

Now, add the numbers in this list.

What is your total? _____

God did exactly what he said he would do, Genesis 6:7,13; and 7:21. Sin and wickedness are so serious in God's sight. God will always judge sin, but he may not do so very quickly. God often delays judgement because he really wants everybody to be saved. He gives people the chance to change their ways.

Stop and discuss (3) We learn three very important things about God in this story of Noah. What are they?

1. 6 verses 5-7
2. 6 verse 13
3. 6 verses 18-22

One whole year and ten days passed before the earth was dry again, Genesis 7 verse 11 and 8 verse 14. God gave humanity a new start, with Noah and his family, 8:15-17.

God put the coloured rainbow into the sky whenever there is sunshine and rain clouds, to remind people of his promise. He promised never to destroy the whole world with a flood again, Genesis 9:12-17. This bow is seen today as a sign of God's promise to the world.

Even in a time of God's judgement, God still enjoys receiving the personal worship of those who will offer it to him, 8 verses 20,21. God's plan for

humans is still to save all those who will “do everything just as God commanded”, 6 verse 22. God’s word must always be our guide in life.

Answers to Stop and discuss.

- | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. wicked | (1) means “morally wrong, wrongly behaved”
(Dictionary page 840) |
| evil | (4) means “very bad” (Dictionary page 254) |
| violent | (2) means “physically damaging, causing real harm”
(Dictionary page 819) |

2. The sum:	1.	133	Genesis 6:15
	2.	3	6:16
	3.	40	7:4
	4.	600	7:6
	5.	17	7:11
	6.	7	7:20
	7.	150	7:24
		<hr/>	
	Total	950	

3.
 1. Sin makes God sad, Genesis 6:5-7
 2. God will judge and destroy sinners, Genesis 6:13
 3. God opens a way to save those he is pleased with, those who are different from the rest, Genesis 6:18-22.

Lesson 5 **God scatters all the people – Babylon**

Bible reference – **Genesis 11:1-9**.

God wanted the earth he had made to be filled with people. From the time of Noah this process began again, Genesis 10 verse 32.

Chapter 10 lists the families that came from Noah's three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth, 10 verse 1.

From Genesis chapter 12 onwards the Bible pays attention to one family chosen from all of the people of the world. It tells that family story beginning with Abraham. The family grew to become the people of God.

Genesis tells us the beginning of different languages. Remember that chapters 10 and 11 do not describe events in the order in which they happened.

In Genesis 11:1 it says:

- "the people of the whole world had only one language and used the same words".

In Genesis 10:5, 20, 31 it speaks of people living in:

- "different tribes and countries, each group speaking its own language".

The Bible is *not* saying untrue facts. It is *not* contradicting itself. Chapter 11 records one event that happened during the time taken by chapter 10.

Stop and discuss (1) *The Bible – God's word – cannot contradict itself. Make sure everyone understands that the verses above **do not** contradict one another.*

Perhaps one student (or more) can try to explain this to the class?

Humans once more rebelled against God's will and plan. God wanted them to "live all over the earth and bring it under their control", Genesis 1 verse 28. But, they chose to stay in one place, chapter 11 verse 4.

God is the Creator. Humans are made in God's image. People also like to make things. In this case, they wanted to build a hard brick city, with one tall, tower going a long, long way up - even as high as the sky!

Sadly, they were not like God, because they did not make things to be kind to other people. (God had made creation for humans to enjoy). These people built this tall tower *only to make a great name for themselves*.

God saw everything that was going on. He also knew the motives inside peoples' hearts. God knew the reasons people did what they did. God's plan is for people to follow his way, not their own. God once more judged humanity for disobedience. This time God did not send a flood, but his judgement is still seen among us today, verses 7-9.

Stop and discuss (2) *What did God do in judging humanity for this disobedience? Genesis 11 verses 7-9.*

1. God gave them different l_____.
2. God made them not u_____ one another.
3. God s_____ them over all the earth.

The different languages we speak today, and our cultures in different plaes of the world, all come from this event of Genesis 11.

God shows he is much greater and stronger than the skills and ability of all this world's people added together, 11 verses 4,9.

We will learn in the next lesson that God does not forget the people he has spread everywhere over the earth, even though they disobey him.

"All nations" may still be blessed by what he is going to do himself through one family, 12 verse 3. God would never forget his own plan – which he had right from the very beginning – his plan to live together with his own, obedient, people.

Stop and discuss (3) *In the story of the Bible so far, how many ways has God shown he is willing to judge people who disobey him?*

Let one class member explain to the rest of the class how God judged people from one of these passages, another student explain the next, and a third explain the last one:

1. Genesis 3
2. Genesis 6,7
3. Genesis 11

Lastly today, notice in Genesis 11 verse 7 another reference to 'one God talking with himself'. "Let *us* go down and mix up their languages". (In Genesis 1 verse 26 God had said "Now *we* will make human beings"). The Bible constantly shows us there is one God and this one God exists in three persons. We see one God and we see three persons. We will learn in later lessons that they are 'God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit'. All have important roles to play in God's plan.

Answers to 'Stop and discuss'.

1. The period of time covered by Genesis chapter 10 is quite long, at least three generations. It is at some time within this period of time that people get together to build the 'Tower of Babylon'.
2.
 1. languages
 2. understand
 3. scattered

3. 1. In **Genesis 3** Adam and Eve were sent out from the Garden of Eden, and guards were placed outside the gates, stopping their return. See verses 24 and 25.
2. In **Genesis 6 and 7** the flood destroyed all of humanity, except for Noah and his family. See 6:15-17; 7:21-23.
3. In **Genesis 11** all people were spread throughout the earth, and made unable to understand each other in word, and in other ways. See 11:7,9.

Lesson 6 **God calls his chosen person – Abraham**

Bible reference – **Genesis 12 verse 1 to 25 verse 11.**

After revealing the beginning of our world, the Bible now begins to focus on the 'people of God'. Not all people are 'people of God'! Every person is made by God and is loved by God. But only those who listen to the call God gives them, and then live the way that his call demands, are real women and men of God.

Abram is our first example.

In Genesis 12 verses 1-4 Abram follows God's calling for his life. He is to leave behind all that is well-known to him – the place, the people, and even his closest family. He is to go where God shows him. Hebrews 11 verses 8-10 say that he moved "by faith". This means he was sure that God knew what was best for him. He decided he would follow wherever God led him.

'People of God' are those who trust in God in their daily lives. God looks for such people to use, even today.

Stop and discuss (1) *Abram was not always known by this name.*

- *Can you find his other name? Copy it out _____*
 - *Can you find the chapter and verse where God changes his name from one to the other? Genesis chapter _____ verse _____*
 - *What does the new name mean? _____*
-

In these fourteen chapters God speaks to Abraham several times (see the list 3 below). Abraham always has the choice: he can listen to God, or he can ignore God. Every time God calls him, Abraham can either do what God tells him to do, or he can choose to live life his own way. Because Abraham usually trusted God to guide him through his life, God was able to trust him with a great responsibility! Abraham was one of the 'people of God'.

Stop and discuss (2) *Read Genesis 18 verses 18-19. In these two verses, what are three purposes for which God chose Abraham?*

God always wants his people to be living to his plan, in the place he has provided for them. This is what heaven is going to be! People of God are those who begin to live this way now, in their everyday world.

Abraham was not perfect. He and his wife, Sarah, try to help God keep his own promise. They try the culturally acceptable method of having a child through a servant, Genesis 16 verses 1-4. Although this may have seemed a good idea to them, it was not what God wanted. God was going to help Sarah have a 'miracle' son, even though she thought she was too old to have a baby, Genesis 17 verses 16, 17, 19, 21; Genesis 18 verses 10-15. Sarah had a son and she called him Isaac.

God showed his greatness in being willing to bless both children – Ishmael (a child through the maidservant), and Isaac (a child through Sarah), see

Genesis 17 verses 19-22. But it was to be through Isaac – God’s chosen son for Abraham – that the whole world would be blessed. God’s greatness and his grace enable him to overcome our foolish mistakes. When we go our own way, he can bring us back to his way. His way is always best.

It is easier to trust God when you know him. Abraham believed in “Yahweh/Jehovah”, Genesis 12 verse 8; “God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth”, 14 verse 22; “God Almighty”, 17 verse 1; “Judge of all the earth”, 18 verse 25; “the eternal God”, 21 verse 33 .

God is so great. The better we know him, the more we can trust him.

Stop and discuss (3) *Divide the class in to six small groups.*

Ask each group to look up one of the following Bible passages.

Encourage each group to use their own words and explain, in just one or two sentences, what Abraham had to do in order to obey God.

1. Genesis 15 verses 1-6
2. Genesis 17 verses 8-14,23
3. Genesis 17 verses 15-22
4. Genesis 21 verses 8-14
5. Genesis 22 verses 1-8
6. Genesis 24 verses 1-9

At the end, let each group share their sentences with the whole class.

Answers to ‘Stop and discuss’

1.
 - Abraham
 - chapter 17 verse 5
 - ‘father of many’
2. **God purposed**
 1. Abraham to become a powerful nation
 2. To bless the whole world through Abraham
 3. Abraham would direct his own children in the ways of following God.
3.
 1. Abram had to believe that God would give him a son from his own body, who would become a large number of descendants.
 2. Abraham had to circumcise himself, and all males over 8 days old in his family household. This was a sign of God’s covenant promise.
 3. Abraham had to believe God could and would give him a son through his wife, Sarah, even though she was too old to have children. (Hebrews 11 verse 11).
 4. Abraham had to provide a start in life for Ishmael, the child of his wife’s servant. He also had to trust God to provide for them in the long term.
 5. Abraham had to believe God would keep his promise through Isaac, even if it meant having him rise from the dead, (Hebrews 11 verse 19).

Abraham had to trust God that his chief servant would find the right wife for Isaac, from among his own people, his own tribe.

Lesson 7 This special family move into Egypt – Joseph

Bible reference – **Genesis 37, 39-50.**

In the Bible story Abraham's family line continues through Isaac, Genesis 25 verses 19 and 20 and then through Jacob. Jacob was a twin. He took his birthright from his older twin brother, Esau, Genesis 25 verses 24-26. These three names of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are often spoken together when God shows himself to people.

Stop and discuss (1)

1. Who hears this name in Exodus 3 verse 6?
2. Who uses/speaks this name in Matthew 22 verse 32?

The name "God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob" helps us to remember that our God is the same one who entered a covenant with his people long ago. He is the same God today, still keeping all his promises.

Matthew begins the New Testament by reminding us that Jacob is the ancestor of Joseph (in the Christmas story) and therefore Jesus is from his family:

Matthew 1 verses 15 and 16.

Jacob's children became the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel. (Jacob's name was changed to Israel by God in Genesis 32 verse 28). They are named in Genesis 49. Can you find them all?

Stop and discuss (2) *Divide the class into small groups of about 5 people. Which group can be first to write a correct list of the 12 sons of Jacob?*

Write the names and the verse numbers from Genesis 49.

- | | |
|-----|-------|
| 1. | verse |
| 2. | verse |
| 3. | verse |
| 4. | verse |
| 5. | verse |
| 6. | verse |
| 7. | verse |
| 8. | verse |
| 9. | verse |
| 10. | verse |
| 11. | verse |
| 12. | verse |

Genesis chapters 37-50 tell the story of Jacob's son, Joseph.

Joseph is not Jacob's first son, but he is his favourite son – Jacob liked Joseph more than all his other sons:

Genesis 37 verse 3

Jacob and family lived in the land of Canaan, Genesis 37 verse 1. This is where God had promised Abraham he would live, and his family after him would possess land and live there too:

Genesis 12 verse 7

Genesis 15 verses 7 and 18.

The life-story of Joseph is important in Israel's history. It shows how the people of Israel left the land they were promised by God and moved to Egypt.

Joseph arrives in Egypt before anyone else from the family. He did not choose to go there, he went as a slave and ended up as a prisoner!

Stop and act (3) *Have some of the class act out Genesis 37 verses 12-36, while you (or a good reader from the class) read this summary of it:*

- *11 brothers are looking after sheep.*
- *Joseph is sent from his father Jacob to ask how things are*
- *the brothers see him coming in the distance and capture Joseph*
- *they throw him into a bore hole dug for water and leave him*
- *they see Midianite merchants coming*
- *the brothers go and pull Joseph from the pit*
- *and sell him to the Midianites*
- *the Midianite camel train then continues on to Egypt, taking Joseph with them.*

Joseph was thrown into prison when he was falsely accused of attempted rape, Genesis 39 verses 16-20. He must have wondered whether God really was in control of his life! First, he was sold into slavery by his brothers, and then he was put into prison on a false charge. Years passed by. Joseph earned the respect of the prison keeper and was used to help run the prisoners' daily programme, verse 21-23.

God gave Joseph the gift of understanding the meaning of dreams. One day, Pharaoh – the king of Egypt – had a dream. Pharaoh wanted to know what the dream meant. A wine steward to the king, who had been with Joseph in prison, heard that Pharaoh was troubled by two dreams. He knew Joseph could give the meanings if God helped him. The wine steward told the king about Joseph. Joseph told the king that God had shown the same lesson in both dreams. There was going to be seven years of good harvests followed by seven years of famine in Egypt and the surrounding area. Pharaoh should plan wisely to survive the difficult years. Pharaoh made Joseph "governor over all Egypt", Genesis 41 verses 40-41. He was only 30 years old, but God had already led him through slavery, and prison, to become a very, very important young man in Egypt.

The years of good harvests and then the years of famine came. The other 11 of Joseph's brothers were with their father, Jacob, in Canaan. The famine was bad there and they were among the crowds who travelled many days to Egypt to buy food. (Joseph had made sure Egypt was prepared well for the tough times).

In Genesis chapters 42-45 we are told the brothers twice came to buy food for their family back in Canaan. They bought food from Joseph – but they did not know this important leader was their younger brother Joseph! They had not seen or heard of him since they sold him into slavery to the Midianites.

Stop and act (4) Have some of the class act out this summary of the Genesis story as you (or a good reader from the class) reads it out aloud.

- Joseph is selling grain to those who come to him
- His 11 brothers come in. He knows who they are, but they do not know him.
- he sends everyone away except his brothers
- crying, Joseph tells them who he is
- the brothers are afraid he will arrest them. They remember what they did
- he tells them not to worry, but to go and bring his father to Egypt
- they go, and they return with Jacob and all of the family
- Joseph and Jacob (son and father) throw their arms around each other
- they go to Pharaoh, who gives them a place to live nearby

So, God's special family are all in Egypt! They are not where God wants them to be in the end, but they are where he will look after their daily needs for the present famine, Genesis chapters 46 and 47.

When the old man Jacob died, Joseph promised his brothers that he would never pay them back for the wrong they did to him. In fact, in Genesis 50 verse 20 Joseph tells us what he understood had happened.

Stop and discuss (5) Fill in the four missing words that Joseph said to his brothers:

"You plotted e_____ against me, but God turned it into g_____, in order to p_____ the l_____ of many people who are alive today because of what happened"

Answers to 'Stop and discuss'

1. 1. Moses
2. Jesus

2.
 1. Reuben, verse 3
 2. Simeon, verse 5
 3. Levi, verse 5
 4. Judah, verse 8
 5. Zebulun, verse 13
 6. Issachar, verse 14
 7. Dan, verse 16
 8. Gad, verse 19
 9. Asher, verse 20
 10. Naphtali, verse 21
 11. Joseph, verse 22
 12. Benjamin, verse 27

5. evil good,preserve lives Genesis 50 verse 20.
(the word 'preserve' means 'to keep safe').

Lesson 8 **God brings them out of captivity, after the Passover –**

Exodus and Moses

Bible reference – **Exodus 12 verses 1-51.**

Living as foreign workers in Egypt, 'God's special family' grew large in numbers. Joseph and his brothers died. After about 135 years the Egyptians had forgotten the help given to them by Joseph in the past.

Exodus 1 verses 6-8.

Pharaoh, the new king of Egypt, tries to stop the population growth of the Israelites.

Stop and discuss (1) *Can you find three orders the king gives to people which aim to stop the growth of God's special family?*

Read Exodus chapter 1 verses 6-22.

God looked after his people. God was working – in the individual lives of common people and of national leaders – to keep his promise to Abraham. God works out his own purpose through human history.

Midwives who "feared God" saved many children from death. God protected one special baby boy whom he had chosen to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and back into their Promised Land.

Exodus 2 verses 1-11.

Stop and discuss (2) *How many people did God use to protect baby Moses and then to help him grow into a young man? Write a list of them all.*

Ask three people to read Exodus 2 verses 23-25 aloud to the class.

Stop and discuss (3) *Ask the class:*

1. *How do you know it was a very long and a very hard time for the people of God?*
2. *What do you think they cried out to God?*

In the past, God called Abraham. Now God calls Moses. Exodus chapters 3 and 4 tell us about this. God makes Moses come and look at a bush that was on fire but did not burn away. He speaks to Moses by name from the bush and warns him to be careful because of God's own burning holiness. God reminds Moses he is "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob". God tells Moses that he will rescue the people and answer their prayers, Exodus 3 verse 8.

Moses is surprised and afraid when God tells him that he is going to be the leader of Israel. Moses will have to meet with the Pharaoh of Egypt. He makes excuses because he does not want to do it, but God answers them all one by one.

Stop and read (4) *Divide the class into two.*

Tell **one half** to read aloud and altogether the words of **God**.
Tell **the other half** to reply aloud and altogether by reading the words of **Moses**.

This is the script for the two sides (God/Moses) to read:

God: Moses, Moses.

Moses: Here I am.

God: I am going to rescue my people, and you are to help me.

Moses: I am not a big, important, person. I can't do that.

God: I'll be with you. Bring my people to worship me here on this mountain.

Moses: Who do I tell the Israelites is calling me to be the leader of Israel?

God: I am who I am! The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.

Moses: What if they don't believe me?

God: I'll turn your walking staff into a snake – like this, and when you pick it up it will change back – like this. This miracle sign will help them believe.

Moses: O.K.

God: Your arm will turn leprous, and then be cleansed, as a second sign.

Moses: O.K.

God: When you pour Nile river water on to the ground it will turn to blood, as a third sign.

Moses: O.K.

God: Is there anything else, Moses?

Moses: I'm not a good speaker. Don't send me.

God: I'll help you talk, Moses.

Moses: No, Lord, please send someone else.

God: I'm getting angry with you, Moses. I'll tell you what to say.

You tell it to your brother Aaron, and he can speak to the people.

In Exodus chapters 5 and 7 verse 14 to chapter 11 verse 10, Moses and Aaron go and see Pharaoh. They ask his permission to lead Israel into the desert and worship God. Pharaoh either says: 'No', or, if he says 'Yes', he soon changes his mind! God responds by sending plagues – disasters – one after another on to Egypt and Pharaoh the king.

- First the river turns to blood.
- Next, frogs cover the land.
- Then, gnats and
- Then, flies cover everything and everybody.
- Disease brings death to Egyptian animals (but not to Israeli ones, chapter 9 verse 6).
- Boils painfully break out on the skins of people and animals.
- A heavy storm of hail stones – ice like rain – kills many people and destroys crops.
- Locusts come and eat whatever is left.
- And darkness covers the Egyptians (but not the Israelis, chapter 10 verse 23) for 3 whole days.

Stop and discuss (5) Ask the class:

1. How many 'plagues' (or disasters) have I just told you about
2. Which ones can you remember?

God was proving he was the Saving God and he was giving the Israelites something to tell their children and grandchildren about, Exodus 10 verses 1-2. Even one of the most powerful men in the world could not stand against God. Pharaoh's work against God's people only proved how great God's power to save his people really was!

In this story there is one final disaster to come in Exodus 11 and 12. God tells Moses he is going to kill the first-born sons of every Egyptian family. God's own people must protect themselves by carefully obeying God's command. If they don't obey they will suffer death as well. God's people must kill a perfect lamb and paint the blood on to the door posts and over the top of the doors of their homes. They are also to eat a special meal and pack up all of their belongings ready for a long journey.

The Israelites obey God. When God kills the first-born, he 'passes over' all of the homes where the blood had been painted. God's people are saved by their obedience. The sign of the blood keeps them safe.

430 years after coming to Egypt to escape famine the Israelites left Egypt. Pharaoh said they can go. Other Egyptians urge the Israelites to leave before any more death comes on them. More than half-a-million men, plus their families and their animals, leave Egypt.

Moses led the people by faith, (Hebrews 11 verse 28).
"The Lord kept watch to bring them out of Egypt", Exodus 12 verse 42.
The Jewish people have a 'Passover' feast to remember this event even today.

Answers to 'Stop and discuss'

1. order 1: 'work the Israelites very, very hard', verses 10,11
 order 2: (to midwives) 'kill their baby boys at birth', verse 16
 order 3: (to anyone) 'throw their baby boys into the Nile river', verse 22.
2. Five people we know about in this Bible story.
 his mother and father, (Hebrews 11 verse 23)
 his sister
 the king's daughter, (a princess)
 one slave-girl
 Probably we should add: a midwife, the princess's other servants, and
 a few neighbours and close friends as well.
 God uses people for his purposes.
3. 1. The verse 23 reads, "years later". And we know Moses had
 grown from a baby into a man.
 2. 'God, please get us out of here!'
 'God, are you going to keep your promise?'

5. There were 9 plagues up to this point in the story:
blood, frogs, gnats, flies, boils, animals deaths, hail stones, locusts,
and darkness.

Lesson 9 God gives the Law

Bible reference – **Exodus 19 and 20.**

Remember this important summary:

- God wants his chosen **people**
- to live in his appointed **place**, and
- to live by the **rules (commands)** that he has set down for living.

This happened once, at the beginning of history in Genesis 1 and 2. It will be true of heaven at the end of time, Revelation 21 and 22. All the way through human history God is calling out a group of people, from among the whole population of the world, to be his own. We saw last time how God led his people out of Egypt to be on their own in the desert and to worship him.

In Exodus chapter 13 verse 17 to 22 we read that God provided a **pillar** of cloud and fire to lead the people by day and by night. He also provided a dry **path** through the sea for them to escape from their enemies. This results in God's people really giving him **praise** from their hearts! (Exodus chapter 15 verses 1-21)

God can always be trusted to finish what he has started.

Stop and discuss (1) *From Exodus chapter 14 work out these missing words:*

1. the king of Egypt changed his m_____
 2. Israel was camped by the R_____ S_____
 3. The Egyptian army p_____ Israel.
(This word means they 'chased' after them).
 4. Moses held his h_____ over the sea.
 5. The Lord drove the sea back with a strong w_____.
 6. Israel went through the sea on d_____ g_____.
 7. The following Egyptian army were c_____ by the returning
w_____.
- (This means that they all drowned).

All of this happened so that God would be honoured, and known by the Egyptians and the Israelites, Exodus 14 verse 4.

Now, as God provides daily food and water for this great crowd of people in the desert, they arrive at Mount Sinai. At the top of the mountain, God says again that he is calling these people to belong to him, Exodus 19 verses 4-6. *Have a good reader, or three good readers, carefully read the verses to the class.*

Stop and learn (2)

The people respond to God's call on their lives.

Can you learn the 9 words they said? From Exodus 19 verse 8:

"We will do everything that the Lord has said".

Make pairs with the person next to you, and test each other to see if you can remember these words that God's people promised. Use your fingers and a thumb to count the nine words.

Perhaps some people can repeat them to the whole class?

To obey God, his people must know what he wants them to do. The next chapters of the Bible give 'the Ten Commandments' and an explanation of how God wants his people to live their everyday lives.

'The Ten Commandments' are a short summary of our duty in life towards God and towards one another, if we choose to be God's people.

Stop and discuss (3) *From Exodus 20 verses 1-17 list in your own words the 'Laws for Life' that God gave to his special people:*

1. verse 3
2. verses 4,5
3. verse 7
4. verse 8
5. verse 12
6. verse 13
7. verse 14
8. verse 15
9. verse 16
10. verse 17

These 'Ten Words from God' were first spoken by God from the cloud-covered Mount Sinai, where all the people heard them. Later, they were twice written by the finger of God on flat stones, Exodus 31 verse 18; 32 verses 15-16; and 34 verses 1 and 28.

If God's people are going to follow God's way for their lives – here it is! The way comes from our Father in heaven. We learn to follow many useful ways and traditions from our human fathers. We like it when our father can be proud of us! God's people will also aim to please God by the way they live. It is this that makes them different from other people around.

The Law of God demands perfection. Psalm 19 verses 7-12 show the great value of the Law. But no-one can keep the Law perfectly! Why would God give a Law that nobody could live up to? Why is the Law worth more than gold to the poor man? Or honey to the hungry man? The answer is that this Law goes beyond the physical things of this world like money and food. The Law shows all people that everyone ever born is a sinner – a Law-breaker – in the sight of Holy God.

Galatians 3 verse 19, "The Law was to show what wrongdoing is."

Moses went up the mountain to receive the commandments from God. He came down to bring them back to the people. And we know what the people promised. He went up the mountain again to receive more commands, Exodus 19 verse 20 to chapter 31 verse 18. In chapter 32 God sends him down again – because most of the people had changed their minds and were already breaking the first and second of the Ten Commandments.

Stop and discuss (4) *Ask the class: 'can anyone remember what the second*

Commandment was?'

Ask someone to read Exodus 32 verses 1-2 to the class.

When we do what we want and not what God wants we are saying that what we want is more important to us than what God wants. This is a way of showing we choose to worship ourselves and not to worship only God .

Trying to keep God's Law is like trying to jump across a river, but landing in the water just too short. Or it is like trying to climb up a tall tree, but falling off before reaching the top. God has given his commands for life to his people – to show that not one person is good enough to keep it!

Stop and discuss (5)

1. Can anyone tell the class what the nine words we learned from Exodus chapter 19 verse 8 were?

*Have a good reader (or five could read one verse each) read Exodus 32 verses 15-19, and ask the class to listen carefully, because you are going to ask them **one** last question for today:*

2. When Moses did finally come down from the mountain, and he saw what the people were doing, what happened to the stones with the Ten Commandments written on to them?

The Laws were broken. God gave them. His people received them. But they chose not to obey them. Sadly, this is what often happens. We shall see this in the next lessons from the history of Israel. We may see it in our own hearts and lives as well.

Answers to 'Stop and discuss'

1.

1. mind, verse 5
2. Red Sea, verse 9
3. pursued, verses 8 and 9
4. held, verse 21
5. wind, verse 21
6. dry ground, verse 22
7. covered ... waters, verse 28

3. these are in MY own words: yours may be a little different!

1. worship only the one true God
2. do not make or worship idols to represent God
3. do not use God's name badly
4. keep one day in seven holy for worshipping God
5. honour your parents
6. do not plan to kill anyone unlawfully
7. do not have sex except with your husband or wife
8. do not take what is not yours without permission
9. do not charge or blame a person wrongly
10. do not be jealous of what other people have

4. Do not make or worship idols to represent God.

5. Moses threw them to the ground and they broke.

Lesson 10 **Disobedience results in aimless wanderings**

Bible reference – **Numbers 9 verse 15 – chapter 36 verse 13.**

The Israelites are about to travel on foot from Sinai through Kadesh into Canaan, the land God promised them as their own. *You may be able to see these places on a map if you have one.* It would be a straight journey of about 350 kilometres, but they did not go in a straight line! Also, they did not enter Canaan from the south – although it was closest to them. When they did go in eventually, they went across the river Jordan from the east (as we shall see next lesson).

This journey was to take about 40 years. Approximately 3 million people travelled.

(See Numbers 1 verse 46 for the number of families, and Numbers chapter 33 for a list of all the places they went to). When we go on journeys we try to take with us enough to eat and drink, and some way of keeping warm. But these people were all miraculously fed by God with manna and quails every day, (Exodus 16 verses 4-5, and Joshua 5 verse 12).

Stop and act (1)

Their camps were set out around “the Tent of his (the Lord’s) presence”, Read slowly to the class Numbers chapter 2 verse 2.

Now let’s see what that must have been like!

- *Divide the class into twelve groups, each group to represent one of Jacob’s sons – the children of Israel. (Use list from lesson 7 answers, on page 25).*
- *Give the twelve tribe ‘leaders’, and one name card or flag each, from the list.*
- *Put a chair into the middle of the room (you will see later this is to represent the Tent of meeting with God).*
- *Put Judah, Issachar and Zebulun to the east of the chair – the leader holding the card, and all the group with him/her.*
- *Put Reuben, Simeon and Gad to the south of the chair – the leader holding the card, and all the group with him/her.*
- *Have Levi and his/her group walk in, carrying their Bibles, and sit around the chair – sitting between the chair and any other groups. Let them put their Bibles on to the chair. Explain this represents the ‘Tent of Meeting’, where the people and their leaders met with God.*
- *Ask the tribe of Joseph to stand up where they are, with their leader holding the ‘Joseph’ card. Take the card away, and appoint a second leader for this group. Give one leader a new card: ‘Ephraim’, and the other a new card: ‘Manasseh’. Divide the group between the two leaders. Explain that Joseph’s tribe was split into his first two sons (Genesis 48 verse 5).*
- *Put Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin to the west of the chair and the Bibles.*
- *Put Dan, Asher and Naphtali to the north of the chair and the Bibles.*

So every time the people of God camped, they set the camp up like this, as we are now set up. Listen to Numbers chapter 2 verses 32-34.

*Read these verses slowly to the class, pointing out the big number of people (with a sweep of your arm) the Levites in the centre (the importance of meeting with God), and then have them 'march' back to their usual class places **one tribe at a time** their leader going first, and holding up his/her card or flag until the last group member is back in their class place.*

God's presence with his people was seen in the Tent of Meeting and in the Pillar of Cloud by day and Fire by night, Numbers 9 verse 15-16. It was through this pillar that God guided his people. They followed when the pillar lifted and moved away, verses 17-23. God's people obeyed God's commands. They left Sinai, Numbers 10 verse 11-13. **God's people were following God's commands and on their way to God's place for them to be.**

As time goes by the people begin to grumble!

Have the boys 'grumble' by saying to each other: 'grumble, grumble, grumble'.

And the people begin to complain!

Have the girls complain by saying to each other: 'murmur, murmur, murmur'.¹

Stop and discuss (2) *Let's see if we can discover what they were grumbling and murmuring about. Look up these verses and tell the class what the people grumbled and murmured about:*

1. Numbers 11 verse 1
2. Numbers 11 verse 4
3. Numbers 12 verse 1
4. Numbers 14 verses 1-3
5. Numbers 16 verses 1-3
6. Numbers 20 verses 2-5
7. Numbers 21 verses 4-5

God's people were not happy with the way God was helping them. God became angry with them, Numbers 11 verse 1, 11 verse 10, 12 verse 9. He still guided them and he still provided for them. But all of the people who had come from Egypt and then grumbled and complained were to be punished by God. God would not let them enter into his promised land, *read (or have a good reader read to the class) Numbers 14 verses 22-23.*

Instead of going into the promised land after about two years, it is not until forty years later that they enter! Disobedience and grumbling against God is punished by him. His own people are not excused from this.

By Numbers 33 verse 50 the Israelites are in the plains of Moab, by the river Jordan just opposite Jericho. *(If you have a map, show these three places).* God warns them that when they enter the Promised Land – now so near by – they must not be influenced by those who worship other gods, but must clear the land and divide it between the twelve tribes, verse 51-54.

¹ See MacMillan School Dictionary, page 481 for the meaning of 'murmur'.

The people of God must never copy those around them who worship other gods. We must be a good influence on them. Do not let them be a bad influence on us.

Answers to 'Stop and discuss'

2.

1. complained about their troubles – *boys say: grumble, grumble, grumble*
2. "if only we could have some meat" – *girls say: murmur, murmur, murmur*
3. criticized Moses over his wife – *boys say: grumble, grumble, grumble*
4. complained they'd rather have died in Egypt – *girls say: murmur, murmur, murmur*
5. to rebel against Moses – *boys say: grumble, grumble, grumble*
6. there was no water – *girls say: murmur, murmur, murmur*
7. lost their patience – *boys and girls say: grumble, grumble, grumble, murmur, murmur, murmur!*

Lesson 11 **Entering the Promised Land – Joshua**

Bible reference – **Numbers 13 verse 1 to 14 verse 10;**
Joshua chapters 1-6.

God's chosen people left the land of Egypt but did not go straight into the land God promised. God told Moses to send spies in front of the people. Moses obeyed. The twelve men, one from each tribe, were to bring back information about the land. 'How good and fruitful is the land'? and 'How well are the people defending it from attack'? Numbers 13 verses 19-20.

After 40 days the spies returned bringing some fruit from Canaan to show how good the land was. But they reported that the people were very strong and powerful, living in well defended cities, verses 25-29.

God's people had to choose. Would they attack the land and people, or would they not? The people were divided over what to do. Two of the spies said: "We should attack now. We will conquer them easily", 13 verse 30 and 14 verse 9. But the other ten spies said, "No, we are not strong enough to attack them", verse 31.

Stop and discuss (1) *In the story, Numbers 13 verse 1 to 14 verse 10.*

1. *Can you find the names of the two spies who wanted the people to attack now?*
2. *Can you find the reason these two men thought in a different way to all of the others?*
3. *From 14 verse 9, find these five words: "t__ L__ i_ w__ u_".*

Whenever we face big problems we must remember that our God is bigger than the difficulty! Joshua – who was going to be the next leader of the people of Israel – reminded the people of this. As long as the people pleased God in their lives, obeying everything he told them to do, God would be with them. This would give them victory.

At this time the Israelites were about 11 days journey from the promised land. Because the people chose wrongly, it took them almost 40 years before they entered the land God had promised them.

At the beginning of the book 'Joshua' God speaks to Joshua. Moses is dead, Joshua is to lead the people into the Promised Land. God would keep his promise. God will go with Joshua and the people. They must make sure they obey all of the Law given to Moses years before, Joshua 1 verses 1-9.

Stop and discuss (2) *In Joshua 1 verses 1-9.*

1. *How many times does God promise to be "with you"?*
2. *What does God say – in three different ways - about the land across the River Jordan, the land between the Egyptian desert, the Lebanese Mountains, (south to north), and the Euphrates River, the Mediterranean Sea, (east to west)? verses 2-4, and verse 6.*

3. *What four things must Joshua and the people do with the book of the Law God gave them? See in verses 7-9.*

Ask the class, 'Can anyone remember the promise God gave to Abraham, in Genesis 12 verses 1-3'?

(When students have answered, have a good reader read the verses to the class).

God promised many descendants, in a new land, becoming a great nation. And "through you (that nation of Abraham's descendants) I will bless all the nations", verse 3. Later in the Bible we see God blesses all the nations from one of Abraham's family, but at this place in the Bible God takes them into the land he promised. Let's see how it happened.

Moses – although he was a great leader – was not allowed into the Promised Land. Moses had dishonoured God by *hitting* the rock with his stick at Kadesh, in the desert. God had told him *to speak to* the rock and provide water from it, Deuteronomy 32 verses 51-52; Numbers 20 verses 2 to 13. The Bible makes it clear that we must obey exactly what God tells us to do. 'Near enough' is not 'good enough'! So Joshua finishes what Moses started.

Ask a good reader to read Joshua 1 verse 7 to the class: "Just be determined, be confident; and make sure that you obey the whole Law that my servant Moses gave you. Do not neglect any part of it and you will succeed wherever you go".

Ask the class to read the verse aloud, altogether. And when they have done it once, ask them to read it aloud, altogether again!

The leaders of Israel said to Joshua: "We will do everything you have told us and will go wherever you send us", 1 verse 16.

Joshua sends two spies into the city of Jericho, the first city they plan to attack. One important thing the spies find out is that the people in Canaan believe that God is helping Israel, 2 verses 8-11. This makes the people of Jericho afraid. And it makes the spies very happy, 2 verse 24. Because they kept God at the top of their minds, they bring a report much better than their ancestors had done back in Numbers 13 verses 28-33. If we are obedient to God we can trust him to be with us however great the opposition.

Stop and act. Ask the students to quickly set themselves up as a camp of Israelites (as they did in Lesson 10). Use the tribal name cards or flags you made. Have the Levites in the middle of the camp, around the chair with some Bibles on it.

Ask the class to pretend the River Jordan is at the front of the class, (perhaps you can mark both sides of the river on the floor, so students can pretend where the water is).

Put twenty-four big stones (or some boxes as pretend stones) in the river. Get the Levites to pick up the chair with the Bibles (representing the Covenant Box, Joshua 3 verse 6). They are to slowly walk across the River Jordan, with all the tribes of Israel slowly following them, one by one. They must keep a

space around the 'Covenant Box' (chair) because it represents the Holy presence of God. When they have crossed the river, they can set up camp again, pretending to be on the other side of the river. The Levites must stay in the river holding the Covenant Box.

Have one person from each tribe go back into the river and each collect one stone, 4 verse 3. They should carry the stone on their shoulders, 4 verse 5. They put them down in their camp before everyone goes to sleep. (You could ask all the students – except the Levites – to lie down and *pretend* to sleep!). Silence!

Ask everyone to wake up. It is now the next day.

Ask one person, representing Joshua, to go into the river and set up the twelve remaining stones in the middle of the river. Say to the class: 'This is to remind the people of **a miracle** God did for them on that day'.

Ask, 'Can anyone find out what the miracle was?' Look in Joshua 3 verse 9 to 4 verse 10'.

(The answer is that the water stopped flowing when the Covenant Box was taken into the river, and 40,000 men crossed over on dry ground, 3 verse 17 and 4 verse 13).

Have Joshua set up a second pile of stones somewhere in the camp. So there are two reminders – one in the river and another in the camp – that God stopped the Jordan flowing while his people entered into the Promised Land, 4 verse 7.

God was clearly with the people of Israel. The Covenant Box was the symbol of his presence. His promise was that he was with them as long as they obeyed him. He promised to meet their every need.

Joshua followed God's plan for the battle against Jericho. The story is in Joshua chapter 6. Nothing like it has ever happened before or since! A small group of soldiers led seven priests who were blowing their trumpets. Behind them came the Levites carrying the Covenant Box. The soldiers marched behind. They went around the walls of Jericho in a circle, one time, every day for six days. Each night they were back in camp. On the seventh day, early in the morning they started to do the same thing again. But they marched around Jericho seven times. As the priests were about to sound the trumpets at the end of the seventh time, Joshua commanded all the people to give a loud shout. As they did so, Jericho's walls collapsed. Now without any defence, Israel easily defeated the people of Jericho. All the people and all the animals were destroyed and the city was burned. Only Rahab and her family were saved. She had helped the two spies and it was agreed she could live, 6 verse 25. Matthew 1 verse 5 tells us that she was to become an ancestor of Jesus Christ, the Saviour from God who would eventually come from Abraham's family line and bless the whole world. (That's later on in our Bible overview).

So God's people, with God's rules for living, begin to live in the land God appointed for them and is now giving to them.

Stop and discuss (3) From Joshua chapter 6 verse 27 fill in the missing words: "So t__ L__ w__ w__ J____, and his fame spread through the w__ c_____."

Answers to 'Stop and discuss'

1.
 1. Caleb, 13 verse 30, and Joshua, 14 verse 6.
 2. They remembered God was going to take them there, 14 verse 8.
 3. "the Lord is with us".
2.
 1. three times, verse 5 and verse 9.
 2. God says he is giving them the land he promised.
"the land that I am giving them" (the people of Israel), verse 2
"I have given you and all my people the entire land", verse 3.
"as they occupy this land which I promised to their ancestors", verse 6.
 3.
 1. obey it all, verses 7,8
 2. do not neglect any part of it, verse 7
 3. read it in public worship, verse 8
 4. study it regularly, verse 8
3. "So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame spread through the whole country".

Lesson 12 **Ups and downs under the leadership of the Judges**

Bible reference – **Joshua 7-8; and Judges**

After success in the battle of Jericho, God's chosen people continued to conquer the land of Canaan and its people.

They learned quickly that they must be obedient to all that God told them. Because one man disobeyed the day they took Jericho, Israel lost their next battle at the small town called Ai, Joshua chapter 7. They recognised that God had taken away his blessing from them, verse 10. Only when the sin was uncovered, and the sinner had paid the penalty, could they succeed again, verses 25-26; and chapter 8 verse 1.

During Joshua's lifetime the Israelites served the Lord, Joshua 24 verse 31; Judges 2:7. They possessed much of the land, but not all of it. They defeated and displaced most of the people, but not all of them.

Stop and discuss (1) *Divide the class into groups of four or five students. Have each group find Judges chapter 1 verse 19 to 2 verse 15 in their Bibles. Ask each group to read the verses to themselves and to find as many verses as they can that describe the Israelites not totally driving the people of Canaan from the land. They should write a list of the verse references. (Tell the students not to worry about all the different names! For our lesson, these are not important). See which group can find the most right answers.*

In Joshua and Judges there is a lot of killing. Seven whole nations of Canaanite people are almost totally killed by Israel as they possess the land God promised to them. (See Joshua 8 verse 24-26; chapter 10 verses 20, 30, 32, 35, 37, 40; chapter 11 verses 8, 11, 14, 21).

We must remember why this destruction happened. This was not cold-blooded murder and stealing from a godly, peace loving people! "The Israelites came as God's chosen people, as instruments to inflict proper judgement upon sin and sinners".² They were carrying out God's judgement. This did not make them better than anyone else. They were accountable to God for everything they did.

Stop and discuss (2) *Have five good readers from the class read slowly and carefully out loud, the following verses:*

Joshua 11 verse 15

Leviticus 18 verses 1-2

Leviticus 18 verses 3-4

Leviticus 18 verses 24-25

Joshua 11 verse 20

God will always judge sin. In his mercy he had waited a long time, giving people opportunity to repent. Then, at the time of God's choice, he used the Israelites to bring his judgement on the wicked Canaanites. More than four

² Theodore Epp Joshua - Victorious by Faith (Lincoln, Nebraska: Back to the Bible) 1968, p.35-37.

hundred years earlier God had told Abraham that this would happen, Genesis 15 verse 16.

The Israelites themselves were warned by God that they would be judged in the same way if they disobeyed God by living evil lives. Now, they were being used by God to punish others. But God would use others to punish them if they did not listen to his commands and follow his way. No person, from any tribe or nation, can ever assume God is on his or her side. God will be with us, and God will be for us when we are living his way.

Joshua and his elders led the people well. They encouraged them to live the right way. God helped them in their battles. But after Joshua died the younger Israelites soon ignored the great lessons from their history, Judges 2 verses 10-12. They turned away from God to worship false gods. Therefore God was against his own people. He did not break his Covenant with them. He fully kept it, as he always will, Judges 2 verse 1. But, at this time, the true and living God fought against his own people. He was trying to bring them back to the way they had been told to live, Judges 2 verse 15.

Judges 2 verse 16 gives this Bible book its title: "Then the Lord gave the Israelites leaders who saved them from the raiders". The word "leaders" is the same Hebrew word "judges". (The Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew language). Some old Bible translators used the word "saviours".

This part of the history of God's special people is a cycle of bad behaviour followed by good behaviour followed by bad behaviour.

From now on it is 'Activity time'! *Ask the class to stand up. Tell them to stand up as tall as they can, hands stretching up towards the sky. They should do this whenever you speak of 'good behaviour'. Next, have them turn with their backs to the sky, bent down low, looking down at the ground. They should do this whenever you mention 'bad behaviour'. Tell them that this should happen for all of the time that is left in today's lesson. Now ask them to sit down – but be ready to stretch up, or to bend low, as you say 'good behaviour' or 'bad behaviour'.*

Tell the class you are going to pick out some stories from the Judges:
God's special people keep forgetting that God chose them for a reason. He wants them to be his people, living in his place, following his plan. This is what God sees as 'good behaviour' (class stretch up). The people are often influenced by those around them. They rebel against God. God sees that as 'bad behaviour' (class bend down).

In Judges 3 verse 7 the people forget the Lord God. They sinned against him, worshipping the idols of Baal and Asherah. God was angry at this bad behaviour (class bend low). God let them be conquered by an enemy for eight years. When the people cried out to God for help he sent them a leader, a judge, a saviour, called Othniel. For forty years Othniel led the people in good behaviour (class stretch up).

In Judges 3 verse 12 the people sin against the Lord again. God sees their bad behaviour (class bend down) and sends another enemy to defeat them. Eighteen years later the Israelites call for God to help them. He gave them a left-handed leader named Ehud. Ehud was the judge for 80 years. He led the good behaviour (class stretch up) of the people.

In Judges 4 verse 1 the bad behaviour (class bend down) of the people means that God lets them be ruled by a violent and cruel Canaanite king. This lasted for twenty years. God's people need help and call out to God. God sends Deborah as leader, saviour and judge. Good behaviour (class stretch up) brought them peace in the land for forty years. Deborah's song of praise to God is Judges chapter 5.

In Judges 6 verse 1 the foolish and forgetful people once more sin against God. This bad behaviour (class bend low) means that for seven years the strong Midianite peoples drive the Israelites to live in hillside caves. All the Israelite crops are stolen or destroyed, year after year. All of their animals are taken away. A prophet – whose name we do not know – warns the people that they are not listening to God. This prophet reminds the people of all God has done through history. God brought the Israelites from Egypt into the land he promised to give them as their own.

God calls another judge to save Israel from the bad situation they were in. His name is Gideon. Gideon leads the people in good behaviour (class stretch up) that God was pleased with! Gideon leads just three hundred men to fight and defeat Midian, Judges chapter 7. God is pleased with the good behaviour (class stretch up). God wants no more bad behaviour (class bend down).

Other judges lead Israel and save them from their bad behaviour (class bend down), encouraging good behaviour (class stretch up). Jephthah is a mighty warrior, Judges 11 verse 1. For eighteen years God lets Israel be the slaves of the Philistines because of their bad behaviour (class bend down). They serve other gods and forget the true and living God, who had helped them so much over many years. Samson is set apart to God from his birth, Judges 13 verse 5. God strengthens him in a special way, verse 25. The powerful Spirit of the Lord makes him strong, 14 verse 19; 15 verse 14. God uses Samson while his good behaviour (class stretch up) pleases God.

So we learn how the good behaviour (class stretch up) and the bad behaviour (class bend down) of the people and their leaders has an effect on everything that happens. If God is angry at their bad behaviour (class bend down), then he is against them. When they cry out to the true and living God for help, their good behaviour (class stretch up) is seen by God. And he sends them a person who is their leader, judge, and saviour.

Stop and discuss (3) *Towards the end of Judges a statement is written four times which introduces the subject of our next lesson. Have students look up these four verses and write out what it says below:*

Judges 17 verse 6
18 verse 1

19 verse 1
21 verse 25

“T_____ w_____ n_____ k_____ i_____ l_____ a_____ t_____ t_____;
a_____ t_____ p_____ d_____ j_____ a_____ t_____ p_____”.

The class could also learn the verse if there is time.

Read and repeat it several times out loud.

See if one female and one male can remember it, and can say it to the whole class.

Answers to ‘Stop and discuss’

1. Judges chapter 1 verse 19, 21, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34;
and chapter 2 verses 12, 14, 15.
Thirteen references in all.
2. I suggest you allow the class to ask any questions they may have about this topic of God commanding violence. There is no need for you to raise a problem if the class do not have one. But if any students are disturbed, share with them about God’s holy hatred of sin and yet his pure love for the sinner, John chapter 3 verses 16,17.
3. “There was no king in Israel at that time;
all the people did just as they pleased”, Judges 17 verse 6.

Lesson 13 **A king is appointed – Samuel and Saul**

Bible reference – **1 Samuel 1-15.**

The book called 'Judges' ends with the words: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he pleased", chapter 21 verse 25. A summary of the events of this time is found in Judges chapter 2 verses 18-19.

(Ask two good readers to read one verse each, aloud to the class).

God was angry. He was sad and disappointed with his chosen people.

Samuel was the last of the judges to lead Israel, 1 Samuel 7 verse 15, Acts 13 verse 20. He was born in answer to the prayers of his mother, Hannah, 1 Samuel chapter 1. Let's see how it happened.

Stop and act (1) *Appoint three class members to be actors, one female and two males. Ask them to act out the story as you read from the summary below. They play the parts of Hannah, Eli and the young Samuel. Encourage the students to use their imagination in playing their roles.*

To involve more people, change the actors for each of the three scenes. (There is no Samuel in scene one). Read the story slowly.

Scene 1: (based on 1 Samuel 1 verses 9-18).

*"The old priest **Eli** was sitting on a chair by the door of the tabernacle (the place of worship, the house of the Lord) at Shiloh.*

Hannah came in. *She slowly walked to the place for praying.*

She knelt down and bowed her head. Her heart was breaking because she had no children. She wanted a baby.

She made a promise to God: "If you give me a son, I will give him to you to be your servant here, as soon as he is old enough".

She did not know what more to pray. Her mouth moved, but no words came out.

Eli looked at her. *He thought she had drunk too much wine. He walked towards her and began to tell her off.*

Hannah replied: *"I have not been drinking, sir. I am telling the Lord all of my troubles. I really do need and want his help".*

Eli looked kindly at Hannah. *He realised he had made a mistake. He said: "May God give you what you have asked him for. Now, go in peace".*

Hannah walked slowly out of the tabernacle. **Eli** returned to his chair and sat down.

Scene two (based on 1 Samuel 1 verses 24-28).

*About three or four years later, **Eli** was lying down at home.*

*Hannah arrived with her young son, **Samuel**. She also brought some things to make an offering to the Lord.*

Eli stood up and came to greet Hannah.

Hannah told Eli how God had answered her prayer. *She was so happy!*

Together, the three of them went into the house of the Lord.

Hannah kept her promise to God. *After making her offerings, she prayed a long and happy prayer to God. Then she went home alone.*

Samuel was left to worship God and serve in the house of the Lord under the guidance of **Eli** the priest.

Scene three (based on 1 Samuel 3 verses 1-21).

As the years passed, **Samuel** served the Lord.

He did what **Eli** told him to do. He kept the lights burning by filling them with oil and trimming the wicks. **Eli** was now nearly blind.

Samuel slept in the house of the Lord, next to the Covenant Box.

Eli slept in his own room nearby.

(Warn **the class** that you will soon want them all to speak out the Lord's voice. They must slowly say: 'Samuel, Samuel', every time you point at the sleeping boy).

One night God spoke to Samuel. (Point at the boy – **the class** say, 'Samuel, Samuel').

Samuel got up and ran to Eli saying 'You called me, sir? Here I am'.

Eli woke up and said: 'I didn't call you. Go back to bed'.

Later God spoke again to Samuel. (Point at the boy – **the class** say, 'Samuel, Samuel').

Samuel got up and ran to Eli saying 'You called me, sir? Here I am'.

Eli woke up a second time and said: 'I didn't call you. Go back to bed'.

A third time God spoke to Samuel. (Point at the boy – **the class** say, 'Samuel, Samuel').

Samuel got up and ran to Eli saying 'You called me, sir? Here I am'.

Eli woke up again and said: 'I didn't call you. But I think I know who did! If he calls again say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening'. Now, go back to bed.

Samuel was soon asleep. The Lord came and stood nearby Samuel.

(Have **the class** come and stand as carefully as they can, near to Samuel).

God spoke to Samuel once again. (Point at the boy – **the class** say, 'Samuel, Samuel').

Samuel said: 'Speak, for your servant is listening'.

The Lord told Samuel some sad things that were soon going to happen to Eli and his family.

In the morning, although he didn't want to, **Samuel** told Eli what God had said.

Eli accepted the message from the Lord.

Samuel continued in the tabernacle. He learned how to listen to God's voice and how to tell other people what it meant for them. This was very important. God was going to use Samuel to do this for the rest of his life.

(Have everyone return to their places).

This Samuel became the first of the prophets to bring God's word to the whole of Israel. A prophet is someone who listens to God. and then speaks to others. He passes on what he 'sees', or understands from God. The Hebrew word 'roeh' means a 'seer'. It is used more of Samuel than anyone else in the Bible.⁴ Not all prophets or seers come from God, but Samuel definitely did. Everyone recognised this,

1 Samuel 3 verses 20-21; chapter 12 verse 18.

⁴ See 1 Samuel 9:11; 9:18; 9:19; 1 Chronicles 9:22; 26:28; 29:29.

Samuel also became the last of the judges to rule Israel, 1 Samuel 7 verse 15. God had prepared and called this man for a very special purpose. He was going to anoint Israel's first ever king!

During 1 Samuel chapters 4 to 7 Israel fight against the Philistines. They fight for the land of Palestine (a form of the word 'Philistine'). The people of God are defeated. The Covenant box is stolen, chapter 4 verse 11. God brought trouble on the Philistines wherever they put the captured Covenant box, chapters 5 and 6. God does not need his people. He is able to do his own work by himself! After twenty years the Lord defeated the Philistines. Loud thunder from heaven made them panic, and Israel chased them away, 1 Samuel 7 verse 10-11.

About twenty-five more years go by and Samuel is now an old man. The people "commit a great sin against the Lord by asking him for a king", 1 Samuel 12 verse 17 (second part).

Let's hear how it happened.

Ask two good readers to read aloud, one verse each, 1 Samuel 8 verses 4-5.

Stop and discuss (2)

Ask, *'can anyone remember the verse learned last lesson?'*

Answer: Judges 17 verse 6 "There was no king in Israel at that time; all the people did just as they pleased".

Ask, *'why did the Israelites want a king?' (If no-one knows, have the two children read again 1 Samuel 8 verses 4-5).*

Answer: The people of God wanted to be like the other countries around them.

Ask, *'What had God called his people to be?'*

Answer: God's people in God's plan in God's place – different from other people because they are the people of God!

Stop and read (3)

Have different children read aloud:

Genesis 12 verses 2-3;

Exodus 19 verses 4-6;

Leviticus 20 verse 26;

Deuteronomy 7 verse 6;

Joshua 1 verses 6-9.

In our lessons so far, we have seen God is patiently fulfilling his promise to Abraham. Over hundreds of years God was faithful to his word. God's special people have not always been so good. Now, in 1 Samuel chapter 8 verse 5, they ask for a king "as other countries have". Verse 20 they want a king, "so that we will be like other nations, with our own king to rule us and to lead us out to war and to fight our battles". How sad God must have been. Samuel was not pleased with the peoples' demand either. But in verse 7 God says to Samuel: "You are not the one they have rejected; I am the one they have rejected as their king".

Even when people choose not to do God's will, God is still in control of events. God will give people what they ask for but, at the same time, he will be working out his own good purpose. God is so great. God knows everything past, present and future. God is never defeated. "God is never surprised by what his people do, nor is he at a loss to know what he should do".⁴

God promised Abraham a great nation through whom the whole world would be blessed, Genesis 12 verses 2-3.

God promised some kings would be among his descendants, Genesis 17 verses 6 and 16.

Through Moses God said that he himself would choose a king, at the right time, Deuteronomy 17 verses 14-15. The verses which follow these explain how the kings would learn to honour the Lord and lead the people wisely.

BUT this was not the right time. Saul was not the right person. God lets the people have what they want. In doing so he is judging them for their disobedience. Through Samuel God warns them what they will have to pay to have a king, 1 Samuel 8 verses 10-22.

Stop and discuss (4)

Ask the class to quietly read to themselves 1 Samuel 8 verses 10-18. Can they find a list of twelve things that a king will take from the people?

Answers: sons, verse 11
daughters, verse 13
best fields, verse 14
best vineyards, verse 14
best olive groves, verse 14
one tenth of corn, verse 15
one tenth of grapes, verse 15
servants, verse 16
best cattle, verse 16
best donkeys, verse 16
one tenth of flocks, verse 17
even the people themselves will be slaves, verse 17

The people still choose to have a king. God told Samuel to let them have what they wanted. God would judge them by letting them have their own way, 1 Samuel 8 verses 18-22. In chapters 9 and 10 Samuel anoints Saul to be the first king for Israel. God tells him to do this, 9 verses 15-16. God will use Saul to save Israel from the Philistines. God will send his Spirit to strengthen him for his new role, 10 verse 6.

Stop and read (5)

Ask three or five students to read these Bible verses:

1 Samuel 10 verse 25

Samuel probably based his teaching about a king on Deuteronomy 17 verses 14-20, where Moses gave God's plans to the people.

1 Samuel 12 verses 14-15

⁴ Warren Wiersbe Be Successful 1 Samuel (Colorado Springs: Cook/Victor) 2001, p.47

Although God was sad the people asked for a king, if they and the king honoured and obeyed God, God would be with them and bless them.

It is sad Saul soon ignored God's commands for a king.

1 Samuel 13 verses 13-14

God, keeping true to his word, would replace Saul with the king he wanted.

Lesson 14 **The best times for Israel – David and Solomon**

Bible references – **1 Samuel 16-19, 31; 2 Samuel 7; 1 Kings 1-8.**

Samuel tells Saul that God has rejected him as king because of his rebellion against God's way. Saul wanted to avoid this. He grabbed hold of Samuel's cloak as he was leaving. The cloak tore. (*You could tear a piece of cloth in two as a visual aid*). Samuel said: "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel away from you today", 1 Samuel 15 verse 28.

God was preparing another man to become king. This man will take the place of the disobedient Saul. He was a "man after God's own heart",⁷ "the kind of man God wants" to be ruler of Israel, 1 Samuel 13 verse 14.

In some tribes men fight and kill to become the tribal chief. Or, local tradition may state that the oldest man becomes head of his village. In other places people vote, choosing the most popular person to lead them. God's method was not like these. Samuel, the judge / leader of God's people, heard God speak to him.

"Get some olive oil and go to Bethlehem, to a man named Jesse, because I have chosen one of his sons to be king", 1 Samuel 16 verse 1.

Jesse had eight sons. David was the youngest. At first, Samuel wanted to decide by looking at the shape and health of their bodies. God reminded him it was more important to think about the person's heart, 16 verse 7. God chooses a person because of their 'heart condition', not because of mere 'physical appearance'.

Stop and discuss (1) *Ask the class to look up and to compare two verses in their Bibles. The verses talk about Saul and David.*

Ask them to find an important difference between Saul and David.

1 Samuel 16 verse 14 and verse 18.

Listen and pretend (2) This story is from 1 Samuel chapters 16 and 17.

God pointed out David as his chosen king. Samuel anointed David with the oil he had brought.

(Ask students to pair with the person sitting next to them. Then let each one pretend to anoint the other with oil, to make them king – or queen!).

David was a shepherd. (*In the same pairs, the students can pretend to look after and to defend their sheep*). As a shepherd David learned how to care for and protect his sheep. God was going to use David later on to care for and protect God's special people.

Saul was still the king. David waited for the right time before taking leadership responsibility for the nation. (*In their pairs, the students can pretend to be patiently waiting*). The right time is always God's time.

⁷ New International Version of the Bible

David took a job carrying Saul's weapons. *(Students pretend to carry weapons)*. He played a musical instrument called a harp. Saul enjoyed listening to it. *(Students pretend to play, or to listen to, good music)*.

The Philistines come to attack Israel and king Saul. *(Let the pairs join together into larger groups, some pretending to be Israelite, others Philistine, soldiers)*. The Philistine champion was a giant called Goliath. *(A few students climb onto another's shoulders to pretend to be giants)*. Goliath was nearly three metres tall.

No Israelite soldier would fight Goliath. Everyone was afraid of him. *(In their pairs, students hide away, pretending to be afraid of the giants)*. David heard about it. He was willing to fight Goliath. After a little while Saul let him do it.

David took his sling. He picked five smooth stones from a stream. *(In pairs, students pretend to choose small stones)*. He walked towards the giant. *(Students pretend to walk)*. He put one stone into his sling. *(Students pretend)*. David swung his sling around and around his head. *(Students pretend – perhaps they can also sway backwards and forwards)*.

The stone hit Goliath in the forehead. He fell to the ground, dead. *(Pretend giant students carefully fall to the ground)*. David became the hero of Israel. *(In pairs, students pretend to cheer and clap)*. God used David, the man he had prepared to lead his people. The people were pleased. But Saul was jealous of David. *(In pairs, students pretend to be jealous of each other)*. *(pretending ends here)*.

Stop and discuss (3) *Ask students to read 1 Samuel chapter 19. Can they find how many times Saul tried to kill David, either by himself or by urging others to do it?*

As time went by three important things happened:

1. Samuel died, 1 Samuel 25 verse 1.
2. King Saul was badly wounded in a battle with the Philistines. He died by killing himself with his own sword, 1 Samuel 31 verse 4.
3. David was made king over all Israel, 2 Samuel 5 verses 3-5.

The Bible story of David is a long one. It goes from 1 Samuel 16 through to 1 Kings 2. Some of the story is told twice, see 1 Chronicles chapters 2-29. Seventy three of the Psalms are noted as being 'by David'⁷.

Ask a good reader to read the first phrase of Acts chapter 13 verse 36:

"David served God's purposes in his own time ...".

In the New Testament, Jesus is often called, "Son of David".

Matthew chapter 1 verse 1 begins, "This is the list of the ancestors of Jesus Christ, a descendant of David, who was a descendant of Abraham".

Ask a good reader to read Acts chapter 7 verse 46:

⁷ Examples are Psalms 3,4,5,6, and 7. See footnotes in the Good News Bible.

“David won God’s favour and asked God to allow him to provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob”.

Up until this time, the worship of God was enjoyed in a tent. God’s Covenant Box was kept in the ‘Tent of the Lord’s Presence’, Exodus 33 verse 7. This was where the people met with God – it was also called ‘the tent of meeting’. God’s people were nomads (this means they moved from place to place rather than living in one place).⁷ Some of the herding⁸ tribes in Sudan live like this today. Now that they were settling into Canaan they built more permanent homes for themselves. Although God can be worshipped anywhere, King David thought that there should also be a more permanent building for the community worship of God.

Stop and discuss (4) *Ask the students to look up 2 Samuel chapter 7 in their Bibles. They could work in small groups if you choose.*

From verses 5 to 16, God reminds David – through Nathan the prophet – that he is working out his plan through Israel.

1. *Ask the students to count how many times God says, “I”, in those verses?*

It was God who brought David from being a shepherd boy to being a king. It was the Lord Almighty who defeated Israel’s enemies in battle. It was God who settled them in the land he chose for them. God keeps his promises. Now God promised David something else.

2. *Ask the students what it was that God promised David? (There are seven things altogether).*

David ruled with God’s blessing. He was very happy.

Ask three students to read 2 Samuel 22 verses 2-4; and two others to read Psalm 18 verses 2-3. (If you know a song based on these words, you could sing it with your class. It is a good way to memorise parts of the Bible).⁹

Stop and discuss (5) *Ask students to find this description of David’s rule as king from Psalm 78 verse 72:*

“David t___ c___ o_ t___ w___ u_____ d_____
a___ l___ t___ w___ s_____”.

David made Solomon the king who would follow him, 1 Kings 1 verse 30. God gave Solomon very great wisdom – some of which is written for us in the Bible’s book of Proverbs, 1 Kings 4 verse 29,30; and Proverbs 1 verses 1-7.¹⁰

Solomon did build the temple of the Lord, 1 Kings 6 verse 1. He started to build 480 years after the miracle of God bringing this people out of Egypt. It was in Jerusalem. It took seven years to build, verse 38. God’s Covenant Box was soon put inside an inner room – the Most Holy Place of the Temple,

⁷ MacMillan School Dictionary (Oxford:Bloomsbury) 2004, p.495

⁸ Tribes “where animals and herds move as groups together”.

⁹ You may need to look at these verses in the New International Version or the Authorised Version of the Bible.

¹⁰ See especially Proverbs 10 verse 1 to 22 verse 16; and 25 verse 1 to 29 verse 27.

1 Kings 8 verse 6. God's people were in God's place just as he promised them. God's words to them were in the centre of their lives. Solomon's prayer at the dedication begins: "Lord God of Israel, there is no god like you in heaven above or on earth below! You keep your covenant with your people and show them your love when they live in wholehearted obedience to you", 1 Kings 8 verse 23.

Stop and learn (6) *Ask the students to learn this Bible verse. Perhaps you could write it in chalk on a board. Ask the students to read it two or three times. Then rub out some of the words. The students keep reading the whole text, (as if all the words were still there). You rub out more words, and more words, until the board is empty. Can the students say the text from their memories?*

Answers to 'Stop and discuss'

1. "the Lord's spirit left Saul",
but people who knew David could see "the Lord is with him".
3. verse 1, verse 10, verse 11, verses 14-15,
verses 19-21 (3 attempts), and verses 22-24. (**8 times in all**).
4.
 1. twenty times!
 2.
 1. God will make David very famous, verse 9,
 2. God will keep him safe, verse 11,
 3. God will make one of David's sons king,
after David dies, verse 12,
 4. That son will build God's temple, verse 13,
 5. God will be like a father to David's son, verse 14,
 6. God will never stop supporting him, verse 15,
 7. God will make David's kingdom last forever – his family
will never stop ruling the kingdom, verse 16.
5. "David took care of them with unselfish devotion and led them with skill".
(Other versions have "with integrity of heart").

Lesson 15 The prophets speak for God

Bible reference – 2 Kings 17 verses 13-20.

In Africa, like the rest of the world, many people claim to speak messages from God. Some may be witch doctors, spirit mediums or those who practise ancestral worship. Islam has its angels, prophets (or apostles), and meditation leaders at shrines to dead holy men. Islam includes Jesus Christ as one of the six great prophets: along with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Muhammad.¹¹

The Bible speaks of prophets. The Good News Bible 'Word List' defines a prophet as "a person who proclaims a message from God".¹² There are many examples in the Old Testament and a few in the New Testament. The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is much more than a prophet. It shows us that he is the Son of God, Matthew 3 verses 16-17; Colossians 2 verse 9.

In the School Dictionary a prophet is "someone who is believed to have been sent by God to lead people and teach religious beliefs". It gives as an example the Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam.¹³ But this Dictionary does not explain what prophets do. It only says that the noun 'prophecy' and the verb 'to prophesy' refer to saying what will happen in the future. Muhammad in the Qur'an and the prophets of the Bible, claim to do much more than that!

The Bible shows us there are true prophets and there are false prophets. It is important for us to know the difference between the two, Deuteronomy 13 verses 1-4.

Stop and discuss (1) Ask every student to look up and read for themselves Deuteronomy chapter 18 verse 18. Then ask them to complete this – God's own definition of a true prophet:

"I w___ t___ h___ w___ t___ s___, a___ h___ w___ t___ t___ p___
e___ l c___."

In the Old Testament prophets are sometimes called "man of God" or "God's servant". They often had a very important role in the nation. They were to keep the nation on the right path. They called the people back to living the right way – living to honour God because they were his special people. There are many prophets in the Bible. In this lesson we will look at two examples.

David was king of Israel. 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12 tell us that David sinned very badly. He stole another man's wife. He tried to cover up what he had done. When that did not work, he had the man fight in the most dangerous place in the war. The man was killed exactly as King David hoped.

¹¹ Qur'an Sura VI verses 84-86

¹² See at the end of the New Testament, after the Index.

¹³ MacMillan School Dictionary, Oxford, 2004, p.581.

God was not pleased, 2 Samuel 11 verse 27. God sent **the prophet Nathan** with a message for King David.

Stop and role play (2) Ask the students to divide into groups of 4/5. In their groups ask them to quietly read 2 Samuel 12 verses 1-15 for a few minutes. These verses include a parable – an everyday story with a much bigger (or deeper) meaning. The Good News Bible has two drawings from the parable for students to look at.

Ask the children to choose two volunteers from every group. One is to be King David for that group, and the other is to be Nathan the prophet. David sits on his throne (wearing a crown if you can make one!). The prophet Nathan comes in to tell him this story, (perhaps with a scroll of paper from which he pretends to read the parable).

Encourage the other 2/3 students in the group to tell 'Nathan' exactly what the story is. They should do this a little piece at a time. 'Nathan' can then pass it on, step by step, out aloud, to King David.

Point out that the 2/3 students are being like God! God told Nathan what to say. Nathan, the prophet, passed God's message on to King David.

Quicker groups could repeat the process, with students changing roles. Allow enough time for all groups to do the whole story at least once.

Stop and discuss (3) In the groups answer these questions from 2 Samuel 12:1-15:

1. Who sent Nathan to David?
2. Why did he do this?
3. What did David do when he heard the prophet's message ?
4. How did God answer David?

Years later, Ahab was king of Israel. 1 Kings chapters 16 verses 29, 30 tell us Ahab was a very evil king. He was worse than all the kings before him! God sent **the prophet Elijah** to King Ahab with a message.

Stop and role play (4) Ask students to divide into bigger groups of 9/10. In their groups have them quietly read 1 Kings chapter 17 verses 1 to 6 and chapter 18 verses 16 to 46. In the Good News Bible there are two drawings for the students to look at.

Each group needs five volunteers. One is to be King Ahab (with his crown). Another is to be the prophet Elijah (with his paper scroll). Three more are to be the false prophets of Baal and Ashera.

Encourage the other 4/5 students to tell the student playing the prophet Elijah exactly what God tells him to do. They should do this a little piece at a time. 'Elijah' can pass God's message on to King Ahab.

Students may want to act out and speak the challenge on Mount Carmel. God's prophet Elijah and the false prophets of Baal build their altars. Be

careful that God's message is clearly passed on from 'Elijah' to 'Ahab'. Remind everyone that this is always the role of a prophet – to hear what God is saying and to pass it on to the people.

Allow time for the groups to act the whole story.

Stop and discuss (5) *In the groups answer these questions from 1 Kings 16 verses 29-30; chapter 17 verses 1-6; and chapter 18 verses 16-46.*

- 1. What was God's message to King Ahab?*
- 2. What was the miracle God used to provide for Elijah in the drought?*
- 3. Why did the prophet Elijah want his prayer to be answered by fire?*

Ask the class if anyone can remember God's definition of a true prophet? (It was from Deuteronomy 18 verse 18: "I will tell him what to say, and he will tell the people everything I command").

Nathan and Elijah were two of God's prophets. Because they walked closely with God they brought his message to the people of their day. They were very brave. They feared God more than they feared human kings who could have killed them for what they said and did. They lived for God and for others, not for themselves.

Over hundreds of years God's special people saw God chose men to preach his message, especially when they stopped worshipping the true God. The people did not like to hear the truth! Some of the prophets suffered badly.

Look at **Jeremiah** for example:

- Jeremiah 26 verses 7-9, he received death threats.
- Jeremiah 36 verses 1-26, his writing was cut up and burned.
- Jeremiah 37 verses 12-16, he was imprisoned in an underground cell.
- Jeremiah 38 verse 6, he was left in the mud at the bottom of a well.
- See Acts 7 verse 52. Stephen accuses the leaders of God's people: "Was there any prophet that your ancestors did not persecute?"

But these men like Nathan, Elijah and Jeremiah, were faithful to God. Their characters and ways of life are written in the Bible for us to learn from. Their messages form large parts of our Old Testament. We should use the Bible to test 'prophets' today.

Jesus Christ said many false prophets would appear after him. Some would even perform amazing miracles:

- See Matthew 24 verse 11, 24.
- See Matthew 7 verses 15-23.

If someone claims to speak from God, examine their personal character very carefully. Do they serve themselves or do they seek the good of others? Does their message always agree with God's rules for his people, given to us in our Bibles?

God's chosen people were warned by the prophets many times. After a little time living by God's plan, they would fall away again – just like animals roaming around and getting lost.

Finally, “God rejected all the Israelites ... and banished them from his sight”, 2 Kings 17 verse 20.

Answers to ‘Stop and discuss’

1. “I will tell him what to say, and he will tell the people everything I command”, Deuteronomy 18 verse 18, (second part).
3.
 1. The Lord, 2 Samuel 12 verse 1.
 2. Because David had sinned against him, 2 Samuel 11 verse 27, and 12 verses 7-9.
 3. David confessed his sin, 2 Samuel 1 verse 13.
 4. God forgave David. The penalty for the sin was paid by another – the baby died, 2 Samuel 12 verses 13, 14 and 18, 19.
5.
 1. It will not rain until God tells me, 1 Kings 17 verse 1.
(In Deuteronomy 28 verses 15, 22-24, God warns that if his special people turn to other gods then he will stop sending rain to the land).
 2. ravens brought him bread and meat two times every day, 1 Kings 17 verse 6.
 3. So that people would see the true and living God and come back to him. 1 Kings 18 verse 37.

Lesson 16 **The kingdom is divided: the prophets continue but the people do not listen**

Bible reference – some verses **from Kings and Chronicles**.

The Bible's books 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles are exactly what their titles say they are. They record the events of the kings of God's people. A king is "a man who rules a country".¹⁴ A chronicle is "a record of events as they happened in the past, in the order in which they happen".¹⁵ Most people have their tribal stories. Events that happened in the past are traditionally told at special times – for example feast days or funerals. In this way the older people pass on the history of the tribe to the younger people.

The Bible tells us that people wrote these historical "chronicles". Everything God wants us to know about his purpose for his people is recorded in the Bible. God makes sure it is done.

(Have three or five good readers read aloud to the class):

1 Chronicles 9 verse 1

1 Chronicles 29 verse 29-30

2 Chronicles 35 verse 26-27

Stop and discuss (1) *Divide the class into groups of 4/5 people. Ask them to find the verses just read to them. From these verses only, can they find out what information is in the books of Kings and Chronicles?*

The time period covered by Kings and Chronicles is about 400 years. Not every small thing that happened was written down! But the most important events, the main sayings and doings of people involved in God's plan are here. Some passages in Samuel, Kings and Chronicles are repeated. (See for example 1 Samuel 31 verses 1-13, and 1 Chronicles 10 verses 1-14). Where small differences occur in the same story it is usually because **Kings is a history of the nation of Israel and its kings**, with a prophetic understanding of events. **Chronicles** is a record of **what God is doing** in choosing people, and rejecting others, to be his own. (See what it says in 1 Chronicles 10 verses 13-14 as an example).

God put his own name on the Temple in Jerusalem, 1 Kings 8 verse 29, 2 Chronicles 6 verse 20, as he had promised years before, Deuteronomy 12 verse 11. God related to his people by his promises, which he always kept. The people were as close to God as they chose to be – when they disobeyed him they were further from him than when they obeyed.

Solomon started as a good king, building the great Temple and an impressive palace. He was a very rich man, but the Bible tells us in two sentences the reason for his failure.

¹⁴ MacMillan School Dictionary, page 407

¹⁵ MacMillan School Dictionary, page 126

Stop and discover (2) Have the students find 1 Kings 11 verse 4 in their Bibles and then write in the words which are only started here:

"H__ w__ n__ f__ t__ t__ L__ h__ G__".

Now ask the students to do the same for 1 Kings 11 verse 6:

"H__ s__ a__ t__ L__ a__ w__ n__ t__ t__
h__ a__ h__ f__ h__ b__".

Anyone who wants to be God's person must try not to sin. He or she must be faithful and true to all God wants them to be.

Because of sin God took the kingdom away from Solomon and his family.

Stop and do

Divide the class into groups of 6-8 students. Half of each group is to act Ahijah the prophet, the other half to act Jeroboam the official.

Give the 'Ahijahs' an old cloth (or piece of paper) – a pretend robe – that can be torn into 12 pieces.

Read 1 Kings 11 verses 28-29. God sent a prophet named Ahijah with a message to Jeroboam, one of king Solomon's trusted officials. The students who are 'Ahijah' walk to meet the 'Jeroboams'.

Read 1 Kings 11 verse 30 out aloud. As you read the 'Ahijahs' can tear their 'robes' into 12 pieces, giving 10 to the 'Jeroboams'.

Make sure the students understand that God is going to do two things:

1. God is going to take 10 tribes away from King Solomon's son, because of Solomon's worship of false gods, verse 33. (See 1 Kings 11 verses 1-4).
2. God is going to let Solomon's son keep 1 tribe, in order to be true to his earlier promise to King David, with whom he was pleased, verse 36. (Note: If a student questions the number of tribes, (12), remember that Judah and Simeon are on the same land, probably viewed as one tribe but in reality two, Joshua 19 verse 9. Later, Judah and parts of Benjamin are the two tribes named as loyal to Solomon's family, 1 Kings 12 verses 20-21; 2 Chronicles 10 verse 17 and 11 verse 1; and 2 Chronicles 15 verse 2. Like today, there probably was not an exact divide between tribes, because of inter-marrying, working partnerships, etc.).

Class activity. During the rest of the class today, have the students make a 'chronicle' of the events. If they can write or draw they could do it individually on a sheet of paper. OR, they can work in groups of 4/5, with chalk on a board, or using large sheets of paper, or even using the dust of the ground smoothed out to write on, with a clearly marked frame.

They need to list Chronicle record numbers 1-8 down the left side of the page, leaving room to write a short sentence – **as shown below** – by every number.

If they cannot write they can discuss each event below. Read them the verses and ask 'What happened?' If this activity is difficult for the class the teacher can prepare the Chronicle record before class and use as a visual aid.

Chronicle record

- 1. Solomon dies**, compare 1 Kings 11 verses 41-43 with 2 Chronicles 9 verses 29-31. (Students write sentence or draw a picture or say.).
- 2. Rehoboam puts heavy burdens on the people**, see 2 Chronicles 10 verses 14-15. Remind the students, Chronicles shows what God is doing through these human activities. (Students write sentence).
- 3. Rehoboam wants to go to war**, see 2 Chronicles 11 verses 1-4. Tell the students he wants to rule over all twelve tribes. Remind them, that God's prophet Shemaiah urges the people to do God's will. God was taking the ten tribes away from Solomon's descendants, verse 4. It was wrong of Rehoboam to want them back. (Students write sentence).
- 4. Ten northern tribes rebel and break away – Israel**, 1 Kings 12 verse 16; 2 Chronicles 10 verses 16-19. (Students write sentence. Remind them to write their best. This is the royal court record of history!).
- 5. Two tribes stay loyal – Judah**, 1 Kings 12 verse 17. Verse 19 is a summary of the position so far. Verse 21 names the loyal tribes as Benjamin and Judah, as does 2 Chronicles 11 verse 1. (Students write sentence).
- 6. Different kings rule Israel in the north and Judah in the south.**
The northern kingdom, Israel, has 19 kings in its history. The southern kingdom has 20. The history is in the next chapters of Kings and Chronicles. When you read them, make sure you know which kingdom is being referred To:
for example: 2 Chronicles 13 verse 1, Abijah king of Judah;
2 Chronicles 18 verse 3, Ahab king of Israel;
2 Chronicles 19 verse 1, Jehoshaphat king of Judah.
Some kings pleased God. Others did not. (Students write sentence).
- 7. Prophets were sent by God** to speak his word to one or the other kingdom. Perhaps the most famous are:
Elijah, sent to Ahab king of Israel, 1 Kings 17 onwards;
Elisha, 2 Kings 2 onwards, sent to both Jehoshaphat king of Judah and Joram king of Israel.
Sometimes people listened to the prophets' words and obeyed. Other times they ignored the message. (Students write sentence).
- 8. God kept on working out his purpose for his people.** God worked through his prophets and with everyone who would honour and obey him.
Hebrews 11 verses 33-40 tells how the faith of these people helped them to trust through terrible situations. God's plan was being completed, although it did not always look that way even to those involved in it. (Students write the last Chronicle sentence).

The completed work of individuals (or of the groups) can now be looked at and praised. Remind students of the meaning of the word 'Chronicle'.

In any time that remains, get the students to try and learn:

"Through faith they fought whole countries and won. They did what was right and received what God promised". Hebrews 11 verse 33 (the first part).
God is still the same today. Those who trust him and live for him soon know this to be true.

Answers to 'Stop and discuss'

1. lists of people and their families, 1 Chronicles 9 verse 1.
the history of the different kings, 1 Chronicles 29 verses 29-30.
the power of the kings,
events that happened to the nation and those around them,
the king's devotion to God, 2 Chronicles 35 verses 26-27.
the king's obedience to the Law.
2. "He was not faithful to the Lord his God", 1 Kings 11 verse 4 (second part).
"He sinned against the Lord and was not true to him as his father David had been ", 1 Kings 11 verse 6.

Lesson 17 Exiled into Babylon

Bible reference – verses **from Kings and Chronicles**.

God had warned his people what would happen if they did not live the way he wanted them to. He hated it when they worshipped other gods. The Ten Commandments, given when God's people were brought out from Egypt at the Exodus, warned that God would judge up to four generations for the sins of worshipping the idols of other gods, Exodus 20 verses 2-6.

Jeroboam was one of the worst kings of Israel – the northern kingdom. The Bible says he was the one “who sinned and led Israel into sin”.

Stop and discuss (1) *Divide the class into groups of 5/6. Each group should have a Bible (hopefully every student can have their own).*

Explain you are going to ask some questions, the answers to which are in the Bible verses you will give out. See which group can be the first to give the right answer. Students should hold their closed Bibles in the air, with arms stretched out above their heads. Only when you give the reference after each question can they lower their arms and begin to look for the answer.

1. *Hold up Bibles.*
Who gave the kingdom of Israel – ten tribes – to Jeroboam?
1 Kings 11 verse 31.
Students look for answer and share it.
2. *Hold up Bibles.*
For God to be with the king, what must Jeroboam be careful to do?
1 Kings 11 verse 38.
Students look for answer and share it.
3. *Hold up Bibles.*
What did Jeroboam do?
1 Kings 14 verses 14-16.
Students look for answer and share it.
4. *Hold up Bibles.*
What did Jeroboam's son king Nadab do?
1 Kings 15 verse 25-26.
Students look for answer and share it.
5. *Hold up Bibles.*
What did his descendant king Ahab do?
1 Kings 21 verse 22.
Students look for answer and share it.
6. *Hold up Bibles.*
What did his son king Ahaziah do?
1 Kings 22 verses 51-53.
Students look for answer and share it.
7. *Hold up Bibles.*
What did Ahab's son king Joram do?
2 Kings 3 verses 1-3.
Students look for answer and share it.

8. *Hold up Bibles.*
Who anointed Jehu king over Israel?
2 Kings 9 verses 1-3 and 6.
Students look for answer and share it.
9. *Hold up Bibles.*
What did king Jehu do?
2 Kings 10 verses 28-31.
Students look for answer and share it.
10. *Hold up Bibles.*
What did Jehu's son king Jehoahaz do?
2 Kings 13 verses 1-2.
Students look for answer and share it.

Ask every group to put into their own words how king Jeroboam, and many of his family after him, led the nation of Israel. Ask each group for a spokesman (or woman) to share their description with the whole class.

Remind the class that although God put these kings into their kingdoms, they were responsible to follow God in their own lives and in the way they led their people. If they did not honour God, God would soon be against them – just as he had said in Exodus 20 verses 2-6. The Bible shows us God is always true to his promises, even when it means him bringing judgement on his own people.

Of course, not all of the kings were bad! We are going to see how one good king, **Josiah**, did NOT follow in the ways of the kings before him. He chose to follow the ways of his ancestor king David. He lived to please the Lord.

Stop and discuss (2) *Ask the class to divide into their groups again, as they did earlier.*

In each group, some should open their Bibles to 2 Kings 22 verses 1 to 23 verse 30. Others should open their Bibles to 2 Chronicles 34 verses 1 to 35 and 35 verses 1-27. Every group needs to be able to read both Bible records. Ask each question in turn. If the class enjoyed holding up their Bibles earlier, get them to do it again before every question.

1. *How old was Josiah when he became king?*
2. *What did Josiah do to please the Lord?*
3. *What did Josiah destroy in his land?*
4. *What did his men find in the ruins at the Temple of the True God?*
5. *When the Law was read to the king, what did he find out about God?*
6. *What did Josiah lead the people in making?*
7. *The king had a big fire. What did he burn?*
8. *Josiah led the people in a celebration. What were they remembering?*
9. *How many sheep, lambs and goats did Josiah give for the celebration?*
10. *Where is Josiah's life story written down?*

Remind the students God has been faithful to his promises even when the kings and people have not been. God has also blessed and used good kings who have tried to lead the people his way.

558 years after the Exodus the Northern Kingdom of Israel was carried away captive by the Assyrians. About 125 years later the Southern Kingdom of Judah fell to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. God's special people were prisoners taken off to far away places. The city and Temple where God placed his name were in ruins.

Have two good readers read to the class one passage each.

This is what happened to the Northern Kingdom:

- 2 Kings 17 verse 7, "Samaria fell because the Israelites sinned against the Lord their God, who had rescued them from the king of Egypt and had led them out of Egypt. They worshipped other gods ..."

This is what happened to the Southern Kingdom:

- 2 Chronicles 36 verses 15-17, "The Lord, the God of their ancestors, had continued to send prophets to warn his people, because he wanted to spare them and the Temple. But they ridiculed God's messengers, ignoring his words and laughing at his prophets, until at last the Lord's anger against his people was so great that there was no escape. So the Lord brought the king of Babylonia to attack them".

God deals with his people like good parents deal with their disobedient children. They are disciplined. Yet God still loves them and works to keep his promises to them if they will see the foolishness of their ways and begin to honour him with their lives.

The prophet Jeremiah gave this message of hope: read slowly and clearly.

- 2 Chronicles 36 verse 21, "The land will lie desolate for 70 years, to make up for the Sabbath rest that has not been observed".

Seventy years! What would God do to keep true to his promise this time?

Answers to 'Stop and discuss'

1.
 1. God
 2. Live obeying God's laws, to please him
 3. Sinned and led the people into sin
 4. Sinned and led the people to sin, like his father
 5. Made God angry by leading the people to sin
 6. Worshipped Baal, following his father's example with the same result
 7. Would not stop sinning, although not as bad as his parents
 8. God
 9. Wiped out Baal worship, but copied Jeroboam's sin
 10. Sinned against the Lord, led Israel to sin, never giving up his evil ways.
2.
 1. 8 years old, 2 Kings 22 verse 1; 2 Chronicles 34 verse 1
 2. Followed David's example, obeying God's laws, 2 Kings 22 verse 2; 2 Chronicles 34 verse 2
 3. Pagan places of worship and their altars, idols and images, 2 Chronicles 34 verses 3-7, especially verse 7
 4. The book of the Law, 2 Kings 22 verse 8; 2 Chronicles 34 verse 14; (the Law God gave to Moses)

5. God was angry because the earlier kings and people disobeyed his Law, 2 Kings 22 verse 13; 2 Chronicles 34 verse 21
6. A Covenant (solemn promise) to go back to keeping the Covenant with God from long ago, 2 Kings 23 verse 3; 2 Chronicles 34 verse 31
7. Everything he found that was used in worshipping false gods, 2 Kings 23 verse 4
8. The Passover, 2 Kings 23 verse 21; 2 Chronicles 35 verse 1; (remember Exodus 12 as the special people were brought out of Egypt by God)
9. 30,000, 2 Chronicles 35 verse 7
10. The History of the Kings of Israel and Judah, 2 Chronicles 35 verse 27; 2 Kings 23 verse 28 omits "Israel and".

Lesson 18 **After many years, going back home**

Bible reference – verses **from Ezra and Nehemiah**.

Jeremiah was one of God's prophets when the last kings of Judah ruled: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. He was only a young man when God called him to be his prophet. From before his birth it was God's intention to use him! See Jeremiah 1 verses 1-8. It is encouraging to know God always has a plan for our lives.

Stop and discuss (1) *Can any students think of ways they can see God planning their own lives up to today?*

We can try at all times to thank God for what he is doing in our lives. At least twice Jeremiah had prophesied that the captivity of God's people would last for only 70 years.

- **Ask** the students to read Jeremiah 25 verses 11-12, quietly to themselves.
- **Ask** if any student can find out *from the verses before*, during which king's reign did Jeremiah make this prophecy? (The answer is in 25 verse 1, *Jehoiakim*).
- **Ask** the students to read Jeremiah 29 verses 10-11, quietly to themselves.
- **Ask** if any student can find out *from the verses before* where king Jehoiachin and the leaders of the people were when Jeremiah wrote this prophecy? (The answer is in 29 verse 2, in exile away from Jerusalem – in Babylon).

The context of a passage in the Bible usually helps us to understand it.

Other prophets were with the people in exile. They were prophesying hope to the people, but it was lies, see verses 8-9. The false prophets told people just what the people wanted to hear. But God wanted the people to settle in the land he had exiled them to, verses 4-7. Seventy years later the time was right for their return. God wanted the people to use the seventy years they waited wisely, not to waste the time.

Wherever we find ourselves, we should keep listening to God so we can know what he is doing. His way is better than our own hopes and desires.

Stop and discuss (2) *Ask the students to count how many times the word "I" is found in Jeremiah 29 verses 10-14. Every time it refers to God at work in some way. Some of the things the people would like. Some they would not like.*

- *See if the students have any questions about what God is doing in their own lives as they think about this. Give a few minutes to share together.*

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah both start in exile at Babylon and finish back in Jerusalem. They both begin with a Persian king making a decree (law) that allowed God's people to move back to Jerusalem.

Stop and act

1. *Have all the students except one small group stand and move to one side of the room, which is going to represent Babylon.*
2. *Put the small group of students over on the other side of the classroom – perhaps with some upside down chairs and rubble. These are the poor who were left in Jerusalem amongst the ruins, never taken captive at all, 2 Kings 25 verse 12. The “poor” students can pretend to till the ground and look after the vineyards to stay alive. It is 700 miles from Jerusalem to Babylon.*
3. *The students “in Babylon” can pretend to build houses, plant gardens, marry, and to pray for the city, see Jeremiah 29 verses 5-7.*

Explain that it is time for God to keep his promise. The Jews (God's people of Judah) will journey back from Babylon to Jerusalem. First, some will go and rebuild the altar and the temple. Second, a smaller group will go with the gifted teacher Ezra, who can teach God's law. Third, Nehemiah will inspire them all to rebuild the city walls. This covers about 100 years of history. *We are going to act it out now. Students keep acting while you tell the story.*

Read aloud 2 Chronicles 36 verse 22. “In the first year that Cyrus of Persia was emperor, the Lord made what he had said through the prophet Jeremiah come true. He prompted Cyrus to issue the following command and send it out in writing to be read aloud everywhere in his empire”.

1. **Appoint** one student as king Cyrus of Babylon and the Persians. *He/she can pretend to write out this command on a scroll. He can write several copies.*
2. **Appoint** 5 messengers to take copies of the command to all parts of Babylon, and to read them aloud to the people. *In different parts of Babylon, the messengers read 2 Chronicles 36 verse 23. “This is the command of Cyrus, Emperor of Persia. The Lord, the God of Heaven, has made me ruler over the whole world and has given me the responsibility of building a temple for him in Jerusalem in Judah. Now, all of you who are God's people, go there, and may the Lord your God be with you”. Show that Ezra 1 verses 2-3 say the same thing.*
3. **Appoint** 80% of the students in Babylon get ready to journey back to Jerusalem. *They collect gifts to help them from the neighbours they will leave in Babylon, Ezra 1 verse 6. King Cyrus returns to them silver and gold stolen from God's temple years before.*

Ask if anyone in the class knows how many exiled people made the journey? **Students can look** in Ezra chapter 1 for the answer. (It is 42,360, verse 64).

4. *These people now journey 700 miles to Jerusalem, across the room, to join the poor already there.*
5. Arriving in Jerusalem, the people do four things. A *collection* is made to build a house of God on the ruins of the old temple. *Some students walk up and freely give things to an appointed treasurer.*

Ask if anyone knows how much was collected? **Students can look** in Ezra chapter 2 verse 69 for the answer. (It is 500 kilos gold, 2,800 of silver, and 100 robes for priests).

Seven months went by.

6. Skilled priests began to *build an altar*, Ezra 3 verse 2. *Students act.*
7. The people all *gathered for a sacrifice* on the altar, Ezra 3 verse 3. *Students act.*

Just over seven more months went by.

8. After collecting some more resources they begin to *rebuild the temple*, Ezra 3 verse 8. *Students act.*

Appoint Ezra, who leads half of the group left in Babylon across to Jerusalem, Ezra 7 verses 1-9. All this time there are those in Babylon wondering what is going on in Jerusalem.

9. Nehemiah is the wine steward for Artaxerxes, now the new Emperor of Persia. **Appoint** two students to play these men. *They act the role of a wine steward* – tasting and bringing wine for the emperor to drink, Nehemiah 1 verses 1 and 11.
10. Nehemiah's brother Hanani, with a few other people, comes from Jerusalem to Babylonia. **Appoint** a *small group who journey across*, Nehemiah 1 verse 2.
11. *Nehemiah questions Hanani* about the condition of Jerusalem. Hanani answers him. *Appointed students act*, Nehemiah 1 verses 2-4.
12. *Nehemiah cries before God* with a broken heart, asking God what can be done about the situation. He has some ideas. *Students act.* Nehemiah 1 verses 4-11.
13. *Students keep acting as you tell the story.* Serving Artaxerxes one day, the Emperor asks Nehemiah why he looks sad. Nehemiah 2 verses 1-2. He quickly prays to God for help. *He tells the Emperor* about the news he has had from his home city, Jerusalem.
The emperor wants to help and Nehemiah asks him for *written permission* to travel with supplies to build the new Jerusalem city walls, Nehemiah 2 verses 4-8.

Remind the students that God is using all of this to keep his promise to his people. Jerusalem, the place where God put his own name, would be rebuilt and repopulated with God's chosen people.

14. *Students keep acting while you tell the story.* Nehemiah and a group from the Emperor *travel* to Jerusalem. They *rest* for three days. Then while everyone else is *asleep* one night, Nehemiah and

a few of his close friends *go right around* the ruined city walls seeing what needs doing to repair them, Nehemiah 2 verses 9 and 11.

15. Next morning Nehemiah *calls his friends and all the people* to help him rebuild the city walls. The *people agree* and are very keen to start, Nehemiah 2 verses 17-18. *Students keep acting while you tell the story.*

Appoint some students still in Babylon to change and pretend to be people from the area outside Jerusalem who are against what Nehemiah is doing.

16. *Students keep acting while you tell the story.* Nehemiah and the people *build the walls*, with the altar and temple safely inside. From time to time *enemies come and laugh* at them. Other times they *threaten to attack* them as in a war. Nehemiah keeps encouraging his people by making sure there are no gaps in their workforce around the walls. He makes them *work while also keeping guard* against attack., Nehemiah chapters 3 verse 1 to 6 verse 19.

Ask if any student knows how long the rebuilding of the city walls took?

Students can look in Nehemiah 6 verse 15 for the answer. (It is 52 days).

17. *Students keep acting while you tell the story.* Nehemiah and Ezra *gather all the people together*. Ezra *stands on a high platform* in front of the people and *reads God's law* to them, Nehemiah 8 verses 1-5.
18. *Students keep acting while you tell the story.* As Ezra stands to read with the book of the Law in his hands, *he says*: "Praise the Lord, the great God". The *people all stand and answer* "Amen and Amen". They *kneel down* in worship to God, with their faces on the ground. Nehemiah 8 verse 6.
19. Ezra and several friends read and *explain the word* of God to the standing people. *Students keep acting while you tell the story.* The people *begin to cry* as they understand what God has done. The priests (you may have to **appoint** some) *move among them* telling them not to cry but to *rejoice* in a special celebration, Nehemiah 8 verses 9-12.
20. The people *confess their sins* because they know God was right to judge them as a nation. And they *also rejoice* in the great salvation God has brought about by bringing them back into their own land, Nehemiah chapter 9.

Ask does anyone know how they ended their celebration?

Students can look in Nehemiah 9 verse 38. (They make a written agreement to be the people of God once again). All the students could write their own names on the chalk board or in the sand. "We are the ones who did this today".

Tell students that the Old Testament tells us that God can always be trusted to keep his word. Again and again God is faithful even when his people are not. God is working his purpose out.

For example:

Someone planned for this school (training centre) to be here today. People bought or rented the land and employed builders to build the rooms. Other people decided on the syllabus and which classes we should have. More people chose to come as teachers. Your family sent you here as students. We are all here today as a result of this planning and working out by many different people.

Behind it all is the plan and purpose of God. As your Father in heaven he wants what is best for you. As almighty God he is always able to bring it about.

End the lesson today by **encouraging the students to be thankful to God** for what he is doing in their lives.

Answers to 'Stop and discuss'

1. Given them a mother and/or father
 Given them brothers and/or sisters
 Kept them safe
 Made them short/tall, thin/fat, etc.
 Helped them have a place at school
 Provided eyes to see, ears to hear, a mind to learn and think, etc.
2. 11 times. "I will show my concern for you"
 "I alone know the plans I have for you"
 "I will answer you"
 "Yes, I say, you will find me"
 "I will restore you"
 "I will gather you from every ... place to which I have scattered you"
 "I will bring you back"
 "I had sent you away"
 "I, the Lord, have spoken".

Lesson 19 **The birth of Jesus Christ – the Gospels**

Bible reading – **Matthew 1 and 2; Luke 1 and 2.**

Four hundred years passed from the time of Nehemiah to the start of New Testament times. No Bible prophet spoke or wrote during this time. It is sometimes called the “period of silence”.

However, two important things happened during this time:

1. **Important collections of scrolls were made.** Some were in the Hebrew language, others translated into Greek. The scrolls of the Law, the Prophets and other Writings were collected together. They are what we know as the ‘Old Testament’. When Jesus and the gospel writers use phrases like, “It is written in the Scripture”, they refer to these collections. A written record is more reliable over a longer time than people speaking to each other.
2. Rome became a big world power following the fall of earlier kingdoms. In 63 B.C. **Rome gained control of Palestine** (now Israel). The Jews were in their own land, but they were not free. Into this situation, Jesus was born.

Stop and discuss (1) *Ask the students to divide into groups of 3/4.*

Have them look at Hebrews 1 verses 1-3 and answer these questions:

1. *By which people has God spoken?*
2. *Where is God the Son now?*
3. *Can you list four things the Son has done?*

The Old Testament promised God would send a Saviour for his people. The people did their best to please God by themselves, but found they kept on slipping back into disobedience. They kept on breaking God’s laws. The New Testament claims that Jesus Christ is the Saviour God sent. Jesus recreated God’s rule over creation. He makes it possible for men and women to live and please God.

In our next lessons we will learn how this happens.

Remember, between the Old and New Testaments there was a period of **400 years of silence**, when God did not speak.

Stop. *Have the class be totally silent and still for 60 seconds. Imagine what it was like with no news at all from God about what he was doing.*

Of course, the religious people still had **their Scriptures** (the Old Testament). They had added to it their own traditional ways of understanding and applying it to daily life. **The sacrifices** were still made in **the Temple** at Jerusalem. The Romans allowed them to have their own religion. *(Perhaps you could have three objects to represent these three things to the students: a scroll for the scriptures; some wood and fire – if you’re very careful! – for the sacrifices; and 4/5 bricks piled up for the temple. Put them at the front of the class as you refer to each one).*

The great temple Solomon had built, 1 Kings chapter 6, had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, 2 Kings 25 verses 9 and 13-17. The returned exiles built

a second temple, Ezra 3 verse 10 onwards. It lasted until about 175B.C. It never had the Covenant Box in it, which was lost at the time of the exile. A third temple was built in Jerusalem 19 B.C. Known as Herod's temple it was brilliant – built of cream stone and gold . It was only finished in A.D.64. It had the Most Holy Place inside it, where some people believed God lived. This is the Temple mentioned in the gospel stories.

But God's next important action did *not* involve the temple, or the sacrifices or the scriptures – although all three were originally given by God to make the people think about this next great event. Most people had forgotten what these things truly meant. God chose to speak to a few ordinary people. They were not special at all. But God was working his purpose out.

The first four books in the New Testament are where four men tell the story of Jesus, each in their own way.

Ask what the word 'gospel' means? ('good news').

Ask does anyone know the names of 'the four gospels'? (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John).

The word 'gospel' in the Bible *never* means a book. It always means 'good news'. Rather than speak of 'four gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John', we would be better saying, "the good news of Jesus Christ written by Matthew (or by Mark, or by Luke, or by John)".

We will learn one thing about each of the four writings.

Mark: Stop and teach the text one step at a time:

- *Divide the class into **five** groups. Give each group one of the five phrases marked here to say loudly and clearly:*
- (1)"This is the / (2)Good News about / (3)Jesus Christ, / (4)the Son of God". / (5) Mark chapter 1 verse 1.
- Have each group say their phrase so everyone hears the whole text, in the right order.
- Next have each group clap the number of syllables, in length of time with their phrase as they say it:
- (1) "Clap clap clap / (2)clap clap clap-clap / (3)clap clap clap / (4)clap clap clap clap". / (5) clap clap-clap clap clap clap.
- Now have some groups say their words and other groups *clap* their words as the text is learned by repetition, for example:
"This is the / clap clap clap-clap / Jesus Christ / clap clap clap clap". / **Mark** chapter 1 verse 1.
- Change groups between saying words and clapping. Keep on until everyone knows the text well! ☺

Luke wanted "to write an orderly account" about the life and teachings of Jesus. Some people told others orally what they had seen or heard. Others wrote down things they saw, heard or remembered. But Luke wanted to give everyone the chance to know all they could about Jesus, Luke 1 verses 1-4.

Matthew: Stop and discuss (2) *Divide the students into groups of 3/4. Ask them to look through **Matthew** chapter 1 verse 18 to chapter 3 verse 3. Can*

they find out how many times Matthew tries to show “the Scripture is fulfilled” in these events in and around Jesus Christ? He usually says “the word of the prophet came true”, or something like it.

John: Stop and discuss (3) Why did John write his account of Jesus’ life?
Students look up and read to each other, John 20 verse 31.

So the New Testament starts with Jesus Christ – four reports of his life. In our Bibles they are called Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

God was coming to people in a way he had never done before. The baby who grew into the man Jesus was the Son of God. He was not “Son of God” as we are sons of our fathers! Jesus was “God the Son” – God himself as a human person. Because he was like us we can understand him better.

Have two good readers ready to read the next verses to the class.

Angels brought the good news to people. (Only parts of the verses are here).

- ☐ Matthew 1 verses 20-21, “... you will name him Jesus – because he will save his people from their sins”.
- ☐ Luke 2 verses 10-11, “... this very day in David’s town your Saviour was born – Christ the Lord!”

Ask students: “What will this Jesus do”? (save his people from sin).

Ask students: “How is this Jesus described, in ONE word”? (Saviour).

An angel visited Zechariah, a Temple priest, and told him his wife Elizabeth is going to have a baby son even though she was very old, Luke 1 verses 5-25.
An angel visited Mary, who is a virgin, not yet married. God had chosen her to be the mother of Jesus, Luke 1 verses 26-38.

An angel visited Joseph her future husband, helping him to see that God was bringing himself to birth in Mary. It is a fantastic miracle. Jesus will be fully God. And he will also be a fully human baby, Matthew 1 verses 18-25; Colossians 1 verse 15.

An angel visited shepherds on a hill by the town of Bethlehem. He told them to go and see the baby. The baby was born in a stable, and slept in a container for animal food. Thousands of angels suddenly appeared and joined in praising God as the shepherds went to see for themselves exactly what God was doing, Luke 2 verses 8-20.

All that God had promised in his word over the centuries began to come true. As John 1 verse 14 says, “The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw his glory, the glory which he received as the Father’s only Son”. John wrote what he and others saw and heard.

Ask: can any one remember why John wrote his account of Jesus?

See John 20 verse 31, in answer 3 below.

Everyone must decide for themselves who they believe Jesus Christ really is.

Answers to 'Stop and discuss'

1. 1. the prophets in the past, and his own Son in the last days, verse 1
The prophets stories are in the Old Testament. The New Testament Gospels are the story of Jesus, God the Son.
 2. At the right hand of God, sitting down, verse 3
 3. the Son created the universe, *and* keeps it going today, verses 2-3
the Son has spoken God's words to us, verse 2
the Son reflects God's glory *and* God's person to us, verse 3
(*'reflects'* means he is the image of God, as we see our own image in a mirror)¹⁶
the Son achieved forgiveness for human sins, verse 3
(*'achieved'* means he had success in doing it)¹⁷
2. Five examples – 1 verse 22; 2 verses 5-6; 2 verse 15; 2 verses 17-18;
2 verse 23 and 3 verse 3.
 3. "These have been written in order that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through your faith in him you may have life", John 20 verse 31.

¹⁶ MacMillan School Dictionary (Oxford) 2004

¹⁷ MacMillan School Dictionary (Oxford) 2004

Lesson 20 **Jesus' life and teaching**

Bible reference – **verses from Matthew and Luke.**

Jesus was a refugee as a child. He was displaced with his mother Mary and Joseph into Egypt. The family ran from king Herod's threats to his life. When Herod died, they returned to make a new home in Nazareth, Matthew 2 verses 13-23. "Nazerat" is today among the southern hills in the Lebanon range, Northern Israel.

Jesus had a difficult start to his human life but God was in complete control. Jesus was who God wanted him to be. And he was where God wanted him to be.

Have two students read the verses that summarise Jesus' childhood:

- "The child (Jesus) grew and became strong; he was full of wisdom, and God's blessings were upon him", Luke 2 verse 40.
- "Jesus grew both in body and in wisdom, gaining favour with God and people", Luke 2 verse 52.

We are going to look at six snapshots²⁰ of the life of Jesus. They will give us a general idea of what went on.

Divide the class into three or six groups. With three groups, every student acts twice. With six groups every student acts once. **Ask** one group to move to the front of the class. **Explain** that every time you change snapshot a different group will come "to the pretend stage" at the front. **They will act** for everyone to see, just what you are saying from the Bible. **Every numbered sentence below** can be acted out. Every sentence **the actors must decide** for themselves whether to work on their own, or in twos, or in bigger groups. Different acts will need different numbers of people.

Snapshot 1: Jesus' baptism (the group at the front act as you speak).

(From Luke 3 verses 1-23; Matthew 3 verses 1-17).

1. John the Baptist was a preacher who lived by eating what he found growing in the desert area of the river Jordan.
2. Many people came and listened to him preaching.
3. Some were very sorry to have broken God's rules for life. They showed it by being baptised by John.
4. John reminded them Isaiah had prophesied this would happen.
5. One day Jesus came. He asked John to baptise him. Jesus had not disobeyed God – his life showed people what God expected of them.
6. After John baptised Jesus a voice came from heaven saying, "This is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased".
7. Jesus was praying quietly.
8. The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove (bird) came from heaven to Jesus.

Everybody who saw this and heard about it wondered who Jesus of Nazareth really was.

²⁰ A snapshot is like a photo. It is "a short explanation or description that tells you what a particular place or situation is like", Macmillan School Dictionary, 2004.

Snapshot 2: Jesus' temptations (Change the group of actors at the front).
(From Luke 4 verses 1-13; Matthew 4 verses 1-11).

1. Jesus was led by the Spirit away from other people, into the desert.
2. For 40 days and nights he did not eat food, so he was hungry.
3. The devil came to Jesus and tempted him with three different ideas.
4. "If you are God's Son, command these stones to turn into bread, starting with this one!", the devil said.
5. Jesus replied: "God wants us to live on his word, the scriptures. It is more important than bread to eat".
6. The devil took Jesus to a mountain top. He showed him all the great kingdoms in the world.
7. The devil offered this greatness and glory to Jesus. All Jesus had to do was to kneel in front of the devil.
8. Jesus said, "No I will not!" He knew only God should be worshipped.
9. The devil moved Jesus to stand on the highest point of Jerusalem's Temple. He said, "Jump. Scripture says angels will catch you before you hit the ground. All these people will see and believe that you are the long expected Messiah".
10. Jesus said, "No! Scripture warns us not to test God". The devil left.
11. Angels came and helped Jesus recover from this battle with evil.

Through his whole life Jesus beat the devil, and evil spirits, simply by trusting and obeying God's word in the scriptures.

Snapshot 3: Jesus starts his ministry (Change to a new group of actors).
(from Luke 4 verses 16-29).

1. Jesus went into the synagogues²⁰ to worship and to teach.
2. The people who heard him praised him. Crowds joined them as they brought their friends.
3. In Nazareth's synagogue the leaders gave him the scroll of Isaiah to read to the people.
4. He stood up to read. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to all types of people".
5. Jesus sat down. People looked at him waiting for what he had to say.
6. Jesus said, "What Isaiah looked forward to, and said would happen, is coming true. It is true today in me".
7. Some of the listeners agreed with him. Others did not.
8. Jesus continued, "All through history only a few people have understood what God is doing – and not always the people you expect. I am not surprised if I am misunderstood here at my home".
9. Some people became very, very angry with Jesus. They dragged him out of the town. From the top of the hill they tried to throw him to his death.
10. God protected his Son. He was able to walk away to safety through the noisy crowd.

From this time onwards people took sides 'for' or 'against' Jesus.
Some believed he was the Son of God. Others could not accept it.

²⁰ "A building that is used by Jewish people for religious services",
MacMillan School Dictionary, 2004.

Snapshot 4: The Kingdom of God has come (Change the actors).
(from Matthew 4 verse 17. Note that Matthew usually writes of the Kingdom of Heaven, while Luke writes of the Kingdom of God. It is the same Kingdom).

Have all the students read the verse aloud together:

“From that time Jesus began to preach his message: “Turn away from your sins, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near””.

1. Every place Jesus went he preached in the synagogues. He preached the Good News about the Kingdom.
He healed people who were sick. (Matthew 4 verse 23).
2. Jesus walked miles from village to village.
Always he preached the Good News about the Kingdom. He usually healed people too. (Matthew 9 verse 35).
3. Jesus told parables,²⁰ like the man who found a very wonderful pearl²¹(treasure) in a field. He was so happy he sold everything he had so he could buy that field. Jesus wants people to know how wonderful it is to find and enter the Kingdom of God. (Matthew 13 verses 44-46).
4. When Simon Peter – one of his followers – recognised who Jesus really was, Jesus told him, “I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven. You know the way to enter it”. Jesus was pleased that Peter had understood correctly. (Matthew 16 verses 16-19).
5. Jesus warned religious people that instead of praising their own religious traditions they should respect God’s Laws. He said, “The Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who live the right way”.
(Matthew 15 verse 3; Matthew 21 verse 43).
6. Jesus promised that before the world ended, this Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, giving everybody a chance to enter the Kingdom.
(Matthew 24 verse 14).

Have all the students read again Matthew 4 verse 17, to finish this snapshot: “From that time Jesus began to preach his message: “Turn away from your sins, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near””.

Snapshot 5: Jesus’ Kingdom was his rule in peoples’ lives – not places
(Change the actors at the front. Give everyone an opportunity to act.)
(From Luke 5 verses 1-11; Luke 5 verses 27-32).

1. Two fishing boats were by the lake where Jesus was teaching. The fishermen were checking and washing their nets nearby.
2. Jesus asked Peter to put his boat in the water but to keep it next to the side. Now Jesus could teach the crowds from his seat in the boat.
3. At the end Jesus wanted the men to sail out into the water and once more throw their net to catch fish. Peter and the others argued it was a waste of time. They already had a bad day with no fish.

²⁰ “a simple story with a moral or religious purpose”, MacMillan School Dictionary, 2004.

²¹ “A small round jewel that is white and shiny”, MacMillan School Dictionary, 2004.

4. But the men did what Jesus said – and they caught so many fish they had to call their friends to help them bring the fish to land.
5. Peter began to think about who Jesus really was. Jesus called him, “Come, follow me and see”. Peter did. So did some other fishermen.
6. One day Jesus’ group walked past Levi sitting at his table collecting taxes. Jesus asked Levi to leave it behind and follow him. He did.
7. Levi introduced many of his friends to Jesus at a dinner party in his own home. Religious people pointed their fingers at Jesus and said he was wrong to mix with such ‘bad’ people.
8. Jesus replied that he had come to this earth for the special purpose of calling all types of people to follow after him into his kingdom.
9. Jesus taught his disciples that the Kingdom was the most important part of their lives. It was more important than food to eat, or clothes to wear, or even working to make the future secure. He said if they put his Father’s Kingdom first – before all other things – then his Father will provide everything else that is needed to live, (Matthew 6 verse 33; Luke 12 verse 31).
10. Later Jesus sent his disciples out to preach the message they had learned from him. The disciples heard the words of Jesus. They also saw the way he lived his life. They preached everywhere they went, “The Kingdom of God has come near you”, (Luke 10 verse 9,11).

Jesus was not interested in people’s race, colour, tribe or nationality. He was looking for people of all types who would be his disciples anywhere.

Snapshot 6: Jesus was not the kind of Messiah people were expecting

(The last change of actors. Make sure all who want to act have time).

(From John 6 verse 15; Matthew 14 verses 22-32).

1. Many people who came to hear Jesus wanted him to be their leader. They wanted to overthrow the Roman occupation of Israel. Jesus knew this and so he often went away on his own. His ideas of King and Kingdom were different to theirs.
2. One day as he stopped teaching he sent the people home and sent the disciples off in a boat across the lake.
3. Jesus went up on a hill to pray alone. It was night time.
4. The boat was halfway across the lake, sailing against the strong wind. It was difficult for the disciples in the boat.
5. Jesus began to cross the lake. He came near the disciples’ boat. He was walking on the water!
6. The disciples thought he was a ghost and were afraid..
7. Peter shouted, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come out on the water towards you”. Jesus did so. Peter started to walk out of the boat but then became more afraid.
8. Jesus reached out and saved him from sinking. “How little faith you have”, Jesus said. “Did you think I would let you drown?”
9. They both got into the boat. The boat with everyone on board reached the other shore in no time at all.
10. The disciples all began to worship Jesus saying, “Truly you are the Son of God”. They did not know anyone else who could walk on water!

Jesus did not want to force his Kingdom on to anybody. It was a Kingdom of people whose hearts were responding to Jesus. He could do amazing miracles. He could also lead an army if he wanted to. But he had come to earth for a different reason.

He wanted to show people that his Kingdom was not what people thought it would be.

(All actors sit down).

Have students read the text once more:

“From that time Jesus began to preach his message: “Turn away from your sins, because the Kingdom of Heaven is near””, Matthew 4 verse 17.

Lesson 21 **Jesus' death and resurrection**

Bible reference – **Matthew 26-28; Luke 22 verse 47 to 24 verse 53.**

The last days of Jesus on earth were spent in Jerusalem. He arrived riding on a donkey. Many people welcomed him – see the picture in the Good News Bible, by Matthew 21 verses 1-11.

Two prophecies were fulfilled by these events. **Have four students read these verses:**

- Zechariah 9 verse 9
- Matthew 21 verses 4-5
- Psalm 118 verse 26
- Matthew 21 verse 9

The people were shouting “Hosanna” – like African women ululate (sing) joyfully welcoming an important visitor. In Hebrew “Hosanna” is a cry for help, “save”. It became a word used in praise and pleasure. Many times Jesus is called “David’s Son” or “Son of David” in Matthew, from 1 verse 1 onwards. This name shows he is descended from the right family to be the Messiah.

Ask students who can ululate to do so, as if a King came into the class.

The crowd were still expecting Jesus to be a strong military hero. They needed to look more closely. Jesus was not dressed in army uniform or riding on a wonderful horse. He was in simple – not royal – clothes, and riding on a small donkey. Jesus was still teaching that his Kingdom turns the standards in the world upside down.

Divide the students into five groups.

Have each group look up one text to read to the class. All of them show that Jesus knew he was going to be arrested, killed as a criminal, and buried in Jerusalem, before he rose again from the dead.

- Matthew 16 verse 21 – **a student reads**
- Matthew 17 verses 22-23 – **a student reads**
- Matthew 20 verses 17-19 – **a student reads**
- Matthew 20 verse 28 – **a student reads**
- Matthew 26 verses 1-2 – **a student reads**

Ask the students in their five groups to make one sentence they can say to the whole class. It must tell what the large crowds were expecting “King” Jesus to do, *and* what he really was going to do. Give them time to think and plan it, perhaps to write it out. Have **each group share** with everyone.

It was Passover time in Jerusalem. **Ask, can anyone remind the class what happened at the very first Passover** – where the name came from – back when God’s special people were being saved from slavery in Egypt?

- Make sure students understand Passover was when Jews remember the night their ancestors painted the blood from a young lamb on the door frames of their homes. God killed the firstborn son in every home that was not saved by this sign of blood. This terrible event persuaded Pharaoh to let God's people leave Egypt, (Exodus 11 and 12).

Jesus and his disciples celebrated the Passover together with many Jews in Jerusalem. They were in a room they borrowed from a friend.

Have the class, in their five groups, sit or recline²² around five tables (or pretend tables). They are going to **act out the end** of this Passover celebration. **Appoint one in each group to act Jesus.** You need five pieces of bread (or kiswa), large enough for the students to have a piece each to eat. You also need five cups of water (or karkadeh) large enough for every student in the group to sip from. And you need a short song everyone can sing well. The event is described in Matthew 26 verses 17-30 and Luke 22 verses 7-23.

Groups act as you speak. *Remember this is only ACTING the celebration.*

- Jesus and his disciples met for the Passover meal.
 - They washed their hands.
 - They sat or reclined around the food table.
 - They ate roasted meat, bread made without yeast and bitter herbs.
 - They also drank wine.
 - They passed the food and drink to one another.
1. At the end of the meal Jesus spoke. *(Perhaps the 'Jesus' actors can repeat these words after you, phrase by phrase, to their own group).* Jesus said, "This is my last Passover with you / before I suffer and die. / We will not eat and drink like this again / until we are together in the Kingdom of God".
 2. Jesus gave some bread to all of them. *(Act).* As they broke off a piece and ate it he said, *(Jesus' actors say after you)*, "This is my body, / which is given for you. / Do this in memory of me". *(Each student breaks a piece of bread and eats it).*
 3. Then Jesus passed a cup of wine around. *(Act).* As they each drank a little from it he said, *(Jesus actors say after you)*, "This cup is God's new covenant / sealed with my blood, / which is poured out for you". *(Each student drinks a little from the cup as it is passed around).*
 4. Jesus wanted his disciples to think about him often, in this way, after he had been taken from them. This was the way King Jesus wanted to be remembered.
 5. Everyone sang a hymn before they went out.
Sing altogether a short song of praise the students know.

Have the class come all together, no longer in groups.

²² "to lie or lean in a comfortable position, with your back supported", Macmillan School Dictionary, 2004.

Tell this story carefully.

Jesus was soon arrested by the temple guards sent by the chief priests and elders. Judas, one of Jesus' disciples, had told them of a quiet time and place. The disciples ran away, although some hid and watched from a safe distance. Jesus was put on trial in front of different councils. The Jews and the Romans had their own ways of doing things.

The Jews accused Jesus of claiming to be the Son of God, (Matthew 26 verses 63-65; Luke 22 verses 70-71). They did not believe he was God the Son. To them his claim meant he was guilty of an insulting crime against God. He deserved only to die.

This was just what Jesus had told his disciples would happen.
As the ruling power, the Romans could execute Jesus.
The Roman governor, Pilate, seemed to try and release Jesus.
But the crowd that had come together shouted for Jesus to be crucified.

Have three students speak the words of Pilate. From different corners of the class they can call out – one by one – after you (to the rest of the class, who are the pretend crowd):

“What shall I do with Jesus called the Messiah?”, (Matthew 27 verse 22).

Have the class shout back the crowd's words:

“Crucify Jesus. Crucify him”, (Luke 23 verse 21).

Perhaps do this two or three times. Then settle the class down.

Tell the class that this is what Jesus told his disciples would happen.

And so Jesus was given to the Roman soldiers, to be crucified.

First they whipped him badly. Then they made fun of him.

They dressed him up as a King.

They put a crown made from thorns on his head.

They spat at him. They hit him.

After this painful torture the soldiers led Jesus to a place just outside the city wall. Golgotha is the Aramaic name, Matthew 27 verse 33. It means “the place of the Skull”. The Romans used a few different ways to crucify. Most likely they hammered nails through Jesus' hands on to the wooden cross bar he carried. Then they drove a long nail through his ankles or feet on to the tall piece. The cross was pulled to stand it up. Jesus was left hanging.

This is what Jesus told his disciples would happen.

Although it was during normal daytime, darkness covered the whole country for three hours from midday. Then Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why did you abandon me”, (Matthew 27 verse 46). (Abandon means to leave someone).

Have the class cry out together:

“My God, my God, why have you left me alone?”

Perhaps do this two or three times.

Jesus was thinking of Psalm 22 where these words come from. He knew he was in the centre of his Father's will. He was trusting himself into his Father's care as he died. Crowds of people witnessed it happen. There was no doubt

about it. Later on Pilate checked Jesus was dead before releasing the body to be buried.

Jesus died, just as he told his disciples to expect.

One very interesting thing happened when Jesus died. It tells us a big part of the meaning of Jesus' death:

Ask a good reader to read Matthew 27 verse 51. "Then the curtain hanging in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split apart"...

1. **Ask**, who did the Jews believe lived behind the curtain in the Most Holy Place of Jerusalem's Temple? (*God himself*).
2. **Ask**, what do you think it means, this curtain being torn at the time of Jesus' death? (*The way into God's presence is open. Jesus death – his blood shed – marks the end of the Temple and all other sacrifices*).

So Jesus was dead and buried. Roman guards were ordered to keep the tomb safe from any thieves. Some people thought the disciples may try to move the body and pretend Jesus was alive again, Matthew 27 verse 62-66.

The disciples locked themselves away in a quiet room.

They were afraid the Jewish religious leaders may try and kill them next.

What happened next is the greatest miracle that ever happened! It has completely changed world history. It changes the lives of hundreds and thousands of individual people every year.

Have every student stand up. They can all pretend to be one of the women in the rest of the story. (There is only one rule: they must not move their feet! Only pretend walking, moving the hands and body.)

1. Early on Sunday morning women from Jesus' followers went to the tomb.
 2. They hoped to find some way of anointing Jesus' body with the spices they carried. They wanted to keep it safe from decay.
 3. Matthew writes there was a violent earthquake as they arrived.
 4. Luke writes the women see angels ("men in bright shining clothes").
 5. The women notice the stone at the tomb entrance is rolled away.
 6. Going into the tomb they saw it was empty! Jesus' body was not there!
- **Ask**, how do you think the women felt? (Shocked, surprised, worried, angry, sad). The students act their own response.

6 students stand in front of the class and read aloud the words the angel said. From Matthew 28 verses 5-6:

- "I know you are looking for Jesus, / who was crucified. / He is not here; / he has been raised, just as he said. / Come here / and see the place where he was lying".

Have them read it several times until the class hear it read very well.

The women ran and told all of the disciples. All that day people told one another what they thought was going on. Some was true. Some was not. Two men were walking home late in the day. On the 11 kilometre journey they talked about all these events. A stranger joined them. He did not seem to know what had been going on. They told him all about Jesus. They said “we had hoped this Jesus would be the one who was going to set Israel free”. “Now he has been crucified”. “Women found his tomb empty”. “No-one knows where the body is”, Luke 24 verses 13-24.

The stranger talked to them about the Scriptures, which he seemed to know very well. He showed them that the Messiah was expected to suffer – not like most people believed. His Kingdom was not of this world, 24 verses 25-28.

When they arrived at the men’s house the three sat down to enjoy a meal together. They suddenly saw this stranger was in fact Jesus! Jesus had risen from the dead! They hurried all the way back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples.

They soon discovered that other disciples had seen the risen Jesus too! And as they talked together Jesus himself came into the room and stood there! He helped them to understand the Scriptures. And he told them he had a plan to use them for the rest of their lives, Luke 24 verses 33-49.

Once more **6 students stand in front of the class and read aloud the words the angel said at Jesus’ tomb.** From Matthew 28 verses 5-6:

- “I know you are looking for Jesus, / who was crucified. / He is not here; / he has been raised, just as he said. / Come here / and see the place where he was lying”.

Have them read it several times.

This is exactly what Jesus had said would happen!

Lesson 22 The Christian church in Jerusalem – Acts and Peter

Bible reference – Acts chapters 1-6; 10-12; 15.

Have students look at Acts 1 verses 1-5 in their Bibles.

1. **Ask**, for how many days after his death and resurrection did Jesus keep showing his friends that he was alive? (40 days, Acts 1 verse 3).
2. **Ask**, what did Jesus talk to his people about? (The Kingdom of God, verse 4).
3. God's special people were those who were living in this Kingdom. God was interested in HOW they lived much more than WHERE they lived.
4. **Ask**, how did God promise He would help them to live the way God wanted them to in his Kingdom? (They were to be given the Holy Spirit, verses 4-5).
5. The book of Acts tells us how Jesus lived on in this world after his death. Jesus worked through people who trusted themselves to him through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Have the students look at Acts 1 verses 6-11.

1. **Ask**, did the followers of Jesus understand this Kingdom of God? (No, they still wanted Israel to be free from Rome, verse 6).
2. **Ask**, what did Jesus tell them to do? (Be witnesses to Jesus throughout the world, with the help of the Holy Spirit, verses 7-8).
3. **Ask**, what is a 'witness'? (Someone who sees or hears something happen. For example, the students are witnesses to this class – their parents and other neighbours *probably* are not).
4. **Ask**, what happened to Jesus when he finished talking? (He went up into a cloud in the sky. He went home to heaven, where he had come from – where he really belonged, verse 9. See John 3 verse 3).
5. **Ask**, what did the 'angels' promise Jesus' followers? (Jesus will come back to earth. They did not say when – but it was certain, verse 11).

Appoint twelve volunteers to act the next event.

Have them **kneel down** quietly at the front, as if they were praying.

Get the rest of the class to **blow, whistle and 'shshshsh'** – make the noises of a strong wind.

The class can **use their hands and arms** to be flames of fire.

Now have them **do both**: being wind and being flames.

The class **stop** and are still.

Suddenly the **twelve get up and move** quickly all around, **saying to everyone**, "God has done great things", "God has done great things", etc.

Settle the class.

Explain that when the Holy Spirit came and filled Jesus' friends they became very courageous and brave. They did not stay hiding away afraid of the Jews. They shared the Good News of Jesus with everyone they met. Jesus was with them as they did (Acts 2).

Stop and discuss (1) *Have students fill in the words of this text.*

"w_____ t_____ H_____ S_____ c_____ u_____ y_____,
y_____ w_____ b_____ f_____ w_____ p_____, and y_____

w_____ b_____ w_____ f_____ m_____ in Jerusalem, in all
Judea and Samaria, and t_____ e_____ o_____ t_____ e_____,
Acts 1 verse 8.

When students have done this

1. **Ask**, when the Holy Spirit fills Jesus' followers, what two things will they become? (1. Filled with power; 2. Witnesses for Jesus).
2. **Ask**, can you remember what a witness is? (Someone who sees or hears something happen)
3. **Ask**, what will "witnesses for Jesus" do? (Tell others what they have seen and heard about Jesus).

Stop and discuss (2) Divide the class into groups of 4/5. Give each group this list of questions. Tell them the answers are in Acts 2 verses 14-47.

Which group working as a team can be the first to answer all correctly?

1. Which Old Testament prophet said the Holy Spirit would come?
2. What was Jesus' home town when he was young?
3. Who planned that Jesus be crucified?
4. Who set Jesus free from the power of death?
5. Who witnessed that Jesus was raised from the dead?
6. Where is Jesus – in his human body – now?
7. When people turn from their sins and follow Jesus' way to live, what will God give them?
8. What did people do to show they were joining the followers of Jesus?
9. What were people called who followed Jesus in this way?
10. How were the practical needs of everybody in the group met?

Bring the class back all together.

Peter was the leading speaker on the day of Pentecost – the day the Holy Spirit was given by God to his special people, Acts 2 verses 1, 14, 38 and 40. At the start of Jesus' ministry Peter was one of the fishermen called by Jesus to follow him, Matthew 4 verses 18-20.

Now Jesus was working through Peter. Peter followed the things he had learned from Jesus during three years of watching and listening. Jesus was not with Peter in a human body anymore. But God the Holy Spirit was with him. He was everything Peter needed.

- The Holy Spirit helped Peter give good answers to people who asked questions, Acts 4 verse 8
- The Holy Spirit made Peter believe he could do things Jesus wanted, Acts 3 verses 4-7 and 4 verse 31
- The Holy Spirit helped Peter to understand and to teach God's word, Acts 2 verse 42 and 4 verse 31
- The Holy Spirit led Peter to meet people he could help, Acts 10 verse 1 to 11 verse 18
- The Holy Spirit helped Peter make right decisions which let God's special people keep on growing, Acts 15 verses 1-22
- The Holy Spirit helped Peter to live "the Jesus way" in his life.
- Peter wrote two books which are in our New Testament.

Stop and discuss (3) Ask the students to find Peter's books and hold up their Bibles open for you to see that they have done so. When everyone has found the place have *students fill the words* of this text.

"B__ h__ in a__ t__ y__ d__, j__ a__ G__
w__ c__ y__ is h__", 1 Peter 1 verse 15.

Holiness is the uniform or badge of God's special people. A policeman or a soldier wears his uniform to tell everyone he is in that group. Christian believers show they are God's special people by holiness of life.

The Holy Spirit helps by filling them with himself. He makes his people more and more like Jesus.

The Holy Spirit moves God's special people as the wind moves the sorghum, durra and millet. People working in the fields cannot see the wind. But they can see and feel what it does. The work of the Holy Spirit is seen and felt in and around Jesus' friends. They live with Jesus as their King.

Have two good readers read to the class:

- "The members of the Council were amazed to see how bold Peter and John were and to learn that they were ordinary men of no education. They realized then that they had been companions of Jesus", Acts 4 verse 13.
- "But you are the chosen race, the King's priests, the holy nation, God's own people, chosen to proclaim the wonderful acts of God, who called you out of darkness into his own marvellous light", 1 Peter 2 verse 9.

Stop and discuss (4) Divide again into groups of 4/5. Peter understood that the old Jewish Temple and its worship sacrifices had been replaced by God.

Ask each group to look up 1 Peter 2 verses 4-5.

- What is God building as a replacement for the stone and gold that made Herod's Temple?

Ask each group to say or write what they understand by "building the spiritual temple", verse 5.

- Write one sentence that can be shared with the whole class.

The risen life of Jesus Christ was seen in more and more people.

Stop and discuss (5) Still in groups of 4/5 add the following sum:

1. The number of believers Acts 1 verse 15
 2. Number added on day of Pentecost Acts 2 verse 41
 3. Number of men who heard and believed Acts 4 verse 4
- TOTAL** _____

Read Acts 5 verses 13-14: "Nobody outside the group dared to join them, even though people spoke highly of them. But more and more people were added to the group – a crowd of men and women who believed in the Lord".

God was working out his purpose for the world.

Answers to 'Stop and discuss'

1. "When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth", Acts 1 verse 8.

2.

1. Joel – Acts 2 verse 16, see Joel 2 verses 28-32
2. Nazareth – Acts 2 verse 22
3. God – verse 23
4. God – verses 24 and 32
5. Peter and the other eleven apostles – verses 32 and 14
6. At the right hand side of God his Father – verse 33
7. God's gift, the Holy Spirit – verse 38
8. They were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ – verses 41 and 38
9. Believers – verse 44
10. The believers shared the practical things they had – verses 44, 45.

3. "Be holy in all that you do, just as God who called you is holy", 1 Peter 1 verse 15.

4. God is building a living temple where his special people are the stones. God has chosen to use people who come to Jesus Christ as they are alive in this spiritual way.

5.	1. Acts 1 verse 15	120	
	2. Acts 2 verse 41	3,000	
	3. Acts 4 verse 4	5,000	<u>TOTAL 8,120.</u>

Lesson 23 Persecution and the problems of growing – Paul

Bible reference – **Acts 8 verses 1-3; 9 verses 1-31; 1 Corinthians 12-14.**

Sometimes the growing church was respected by the people around. Acts 2 verse 46-47; Acts 5 verses 13-14.

But sometimes Christians suffered persecution²³ from the Jewish leaders (and later the Roman Emperors), Acts 4 verses 17-18; Acts 5 verses 17-18; Acts 7 verse 59 to 8 verse 2; Acts 12 verses 1-3.

Early church leaders like Peter wrote letters to teach Christians how to respond to persecution. They must not fight back. People who live in Jesus' Kingdom turn the world's usual ways upside down.

Stop and discuss (1) Have a student read: *“Your conduct among the heathen should be so good that when they accuse you of being evildoers, they will have to recognize your good deeds and so praise God on the Day of his coming”, 1 Peter 2 verse 12.*

Have another five students read: *1 Peter 4 verses 12-16. (See your Bible).*

Ask the class these questions about how to respond to persecution:

1. *Should most Christians expect to be persecuted?*
2. *Should a Christian be ashamed when he/she is persecuted?*
3. *What things can a Christian do when persecuted?*

It is very hard to live this way! But the Holy Spirit gives power to help witness for Jesus. He helps Christians live the “Jesus way”, which is so different to any other way.

See who can find the missing words from this text, 1 Peter 4 verse 19:

“Those who s_____ because it is G_____ w_____ for them, should by their g_____ a_____ trust themselves completely to their Creator, who always k_____ h_____ p_____.”

God helps his special people in difficult times. God is also able to work in the hearts of other people, even those who are against what he is doing.

In Acts chapter 9, Acts 11 verses 25-30; and Acts chapters 13-28, a man with two names is in the middle of the story.

Saul is his name in Hebrew. Paul is his name in Greek.

Paul wrote at least 13 of the books in our New Testament. But when he is introduced in the Bible story he is not a Christian at all!

Divide the class into four groups and have them sit one group in front of you, another behind you, and one more on either side of you. **Explain** we are going to see four events in Paul's life. Each event will be acted by one group. When all four have been looked at, one by one, each group will act its event *again* to make 'an acted programme' of Paul's life.

²³ To 'persecute' is to treat someone very badly because of their race, religion, political beliefs, etc. MacMillan School Dictionary, Oxford 2004.

Event 1 Paul sees Stephen killed for his Christian faith

(Have the group *to your left* act this out as you speak. Make sure the group remember what to act, as later the class will do all four events together).

From Acts 7 verse 57 to 8 verse 2.

- Members of the Jewish Council took hold of the Christian prisoner, Stephen. They were going to kill him. They dragged him out of the court room, and out of the city.
- At a place where there was a steep drop away from the road, they pushed and threw Stephen over the edge.
- Paul was standing nearby watching. As the men took off their coats they gave them to Paul to keep clean.
- Stephen lay hurt and bleeding. He struggled to his knees. He prayed, trusting himself to Jesus as he died. Paul was amazed at Stephen's faith.
- The angry men dropped stones and larger rocks on top of him. The rocks hit him. The men kept on, until Stephen was dead.
- Paul did not throw rocks but he was pleased to see Stephen punished like this. He thought God was pleased too.

Event 2 Paul gets official permission to arrest Christians

(Have the group *behind you* act this out as you speak. Make sure the group remember what to act for later, when the class will do all four events together).

From Acts 8 verse 3 and 9 verses 1-2.

- Paul, with some friends, went house to house to find the homes of Christians in Jerusalem.
- When he found them he dragged out the men, women and the children.
- Without mercy Paul took these people and put them into prison.
- He went to the Jewish High Priest to report what he was doing.
- Paul asked the High Priest to write letters introducing him to the Jews in Damascus – a city to the north-east. Paul took the letters.
- Paul wanted to spread the cruel persecution of Christians as far and wide as he could.
He thought he was serving God by doing this, Acts 22 verse 3.

Event 3 Paul meets the risen Jesus

(Have the group *to your right* act this out as you speak. Make sure the group remember what to act, as later the class will do all four events together).

From Acts 9 verses 2-9.

- Paul called a small group together for the journey to Damascus. It was about 240 kilometers and the journey would take about one week.
- They packed the supplies they needed. Paul kept the important letters safe in his pocket.
- After several days they could see the buildings of Damascus.
- Suddenly a very bright light, it seemed brighter than the sun, flashed around Paul. He fell to the ground.

- A voice from heaven said: “Paul, why persecute me? I am Jesus”. Paul was shaking with fear. He did not expect anything like this to happen.
- Jesus continued talking to him. “Go into Damascus and listen to what I want you to do next”. Paul got up but could not see. He was blind. His friends led him by the hand to the city.

Event 4 Paul joins God’s special people

(Have the group *in front of you* act this out as you speak. Make sure the group remember what to act. When you finish this, the class will put all four events together).

From Acts 9 verses 8-20.

- For three days Paul was blind. He refused all food and water at the place he was staying on Straight Street.
- He prayed and he prayed.
- In another house in the city God spoke by a vision to one of his special people called Ananias. God told him what had happened to Paul. God also told Ananias where to go and visit Paul. Ananias did not really want to go. He had heard about Paul’s violence from Jerusalem.
- At last Ananias obeyed God. He went to Paul. He prayed for Paul, firmly putting his hands on Paul’s head.
- God gave Paul his eyesight and he filled Paul with the Holy Spirit.
- Paul was soon baptised to show he had joined God’s special people.

Now help the class re-tell the story of Paul’s conversion.

(Note: You may prefer to finish the lesson below first and then have this re-telling at the end of today’s class).

You could read the script yourself as each group acts their event, from 1-4.

Or, a group member could read the script while the rest of the group act.

Or, six group members could read the script – one point each, while the rest of the group act. Try to get everyone involved.

Try to get the 4 groups to act the story from start to finish without stopping. It revises the story as it is done!

Paul began to preach as soon as he could. His message is in Acts 9 verse 20. “He began to preach that Jesus was the Son of God”. Now Paul had met Jesus for himself he was changed in what he believed. It was also going to make a very big difference to everything he did.

Paul was persecuted by people who used to be his friends, Acts 9 verses 23-25. He spent time back at his home town of Tarsus. He studied the Scriptures to learn how Jesus Christ was the promised Saviour sent from God. He later became a great teacher of Christianity. Some of the letters he wrote to people and to churches are in our New Testament.

We will look at just four things that Paul wrote.
Have each group look up one in their Bibles and read it to the class.

- *2 Corinthians 5 verse 17: “Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come”.*

Paul knew this in his own life. God’s special people know this too.

- *Romans 14 verse 17: “For God’s Kingdom is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of the righteousness, peace, and joy which the Holy Spirit gives”.*

God’s special people are spiritually alive – with the resurrection life of Jesus. That spiritual life makes a difference to every part of the life we have on earth.

- *1 Corinthians 12 verse 27: “All of you are Christ’s body, and each one is a part of it”.*

Every believer is important to Jesus. And every believer is important to the whole group of God’s special people – in this text called ‘Christ’s body’. Every Christian has a place in the body of the risen Jesus.

- *Galatians 3 verse 29: “If you belong to Christ, then you are the descendants of Abraham and will receive what God has promised”.*

Paul knew this was what God planned right from the very beginning. No human was good enough to shed blood and save anyone. God became human in Jesus. Jesus died and God raised him to life again. Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, are all God’s special people – made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ. They had the promises of God. They looked forward to Jesus, the Messiah.

Christians are God’s special people. We place our faith in Jesus Christ in just the same way. We look back on what Jesus did. We believe who he was on earth then: God the Son. And we believe he is the same in heaven now. Have the four readers read the texts (only) once more to finish class.

Answers to ‘Stop and discuss’

1. Yes – 4 Verse 12
2. No – 4 verse 16
3. “be glad that you are sharing in Christ’s sufferings”, 4 verse 13 and “thank God that you bear Christ’s name”, verse 16, and “be happy to enjoy the Spirit of God resting on your life”, verse 14

Missing words: suffer ... God’s will ... good actions ... keeps his promise.

Lesson 24 **Spreading out to all peoples everywhere**

Bible reference – **Acts chapters 10 – 28.**

Note: at the beginning of class **you need to make a simple map using the classroom.** You could use the whole class floor area to mark out the coast and the cities.

As you mark the cities ask some students to sit in them.

As the lesson moves on: Students seated will represent “not Christians”; and students standing will represent “Christians”.

The last map printed at the back in the Good News Bible has most of the information you need. It is titled “Paul’s journey to Rome”. The lesson will show how the Gospel spreads from Jerusalem (in the south-east of this map: bottom right corner), all the way to Rome (in the north-west: top left corner). Students will see this growth as more and more stand up across the map.

Mark only the following on your map (from right to left, anti-clockwise). Copy only a basic outline of the coast. Write the names of the cities on paper, or ask a student who can remember and say the place name to sit in each city.

- Jerusalem
- Caesarea
- Cyprus
- Antioch in Syria
- Tarsus – see GNB map titled “Paul’s first missionary journey”
- Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe – see GNB map titled “Paul’s second and third journeys”
- Bithynia – see also this map
- Philippi, Corinth – see back on the original GNB map
- Rome

Spread the students between all the places marked on the map.

(1) At the start all students should be seated as “non Christians”.
They should be able to see ‘the map on the floor’, and read their Bibles.

Start telling the story at this point: Jesus’ first disciples were Jews.
And, to begin with, most of the new Christians were Jews in Jerusalem.

(2) A few students stand as “Christians” in Jerusalem.

The Holy Spirit came upon these disciples at Passover, when Jews living in Jerusalem “were joined by Jewish emigrants²⁴ and sympathisers²⁵ from every country in the world, Acts 2 verse 5. Peter explained to everyone what was happening. *Have a student read Acts 2 verse 41, “Many people believed his message and were baptized, and about 3,000 people were added to the group that day”.*

²⁴ Someone who leaves their country to live permanently in another.

²⁵ Someone who supports something.

(3) Many more students stand becoming “Christians” in Jerusalem.

Point out that there are no Christians anywhere else. (Of course, in reality some travellers had gone to other places. But for the purpose of this lesson we are looking at the major movements of God’s special people).

Jesus had told his disciples to be his witnesses in Jerusalem first and then in Judea, through Samaria, and to the whole world, Acts 1 verse 8. It was the terrible persecution in Jerusalem that forced the new Christians to move to other places. *Have a student read Acts 8 verse 1, “That very day the church in Jerusalem began to suffer cruel persecution. All the believers, except the apostles, were scattered throughout the provinces of Judea and Samaria”.* God used persecution to help his special people obey his command!

(4) Most “Christians” standing in Jerusalem move – only a step or two – outside the city. A few move to Cyprus. One goes to Tarsus.

God spoke to Cornelius, the Roman captain in Caesarea. God also told Peter to go from where he was staying and meet Cornelius at Caesarea. Peter was not sure about it. Cornelius was a Roman – a Gentile, not a Jew – and for Peter it was difficult to visit. But Peter went with some friends.

When Peter arrived he told everyone in Cornelius’ house about Jesus. *Have a student read Acts 10 verse 44, “While he was still speaking, the Holy Spirit came down on all those who were listening to his message”.*

Have another student read what Peter said next. Acts 10 verse 47, “These people have received the Holy Spirit, just as we also did. Can anyone, then, stop them being baptized with water?”

God showed Peter that the racism, nationalism, and tribalism of the world is broken down by real Christianity. God is above all of that! God turns it upside down. Any person from any background can believe in the Lord Jesus and be saved, showing it by baptism. That is the way to join God’s special people.

(5) Have a group of standing “Christians” move from Jerusalem to Caesarea. As they arrive some people, already seated in Caesarea, stand up to join them – becoming new “Christians”.

So the growing church included Jews and Gentiles. *Have the student who read Acts 8 verse 1 (see 4 above) read it again.*

Have another student read Acts 11 verse 19, “Some of the believers who were scattered by the persecution which took place when Stephen was killed went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews”.

(6) Have another group of standing “Christians” leave Jerusalem and journey 500 km to Antioch in Syria, (Modern day Antakya in Turkey).

Wherever they went Christians usually began by speaking to Jews – like themselves – about Jesus. But in Antioch some whose homes were in Cyprus started speaking to the Gentiles as well, Acts 11 verse 20.

(7) Have most of the standing “Christians” in Cyprus move to Antioch in Syria. They join the “Christians” from Jerusalem already there.

All the Christians kept sharing the Good News about the Lord Jesus. Barnabas arrived from Jerusalem and Paul arrived from Tarsus to teach the new believers. *Have a student read Acts 11 verse 21, “The Lord’s power was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord”.* The new church gave money to help the believers suffering famine back in Jerusalem. Like Jesus they cared for the poor. Perhaps that’s why they were first called “Christians” in Antioch.

(8) Have Paul move from Tarsus to Antioch in Syria. Have many “not Christians” in Antioch stand and become “Christians”.

As well as looking back to care for Christians in Jerusalem, the early church kept looking forward to areas where people had not heard the Good News of Jesus. God spoke to the church leaders in Antioch. He showed them towns and cities to the north east of them where no-one had spoken about Jesus.

(Encourage students to see on the class map the “seated non-Christian” areas, and “Christian areas” where at least some people are standing).

Have a student read Acts 13 verse 2, “While they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said to them, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Paul, to do the work to which I have called them”.

Paul and Barnabas with a small team left Antioch and journeyed through Cyprus. They went north as far as Antioch in Pisidia. They also went on to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. *Have a student read Acts 14 verse 3, “The apostles stayed there for a long time, speaking boldly about the Lord, who proved that their message about his grace was true by giving them the power to perform miracles and wonders”.*

(9) Have a small team of standing “Christians” leave Antioch in Syria. They travel via Cyprus to Antioch in Pisidia, then on to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. In every city that they visit, some seated “not Christians” stand as joining the “Christians”.

God’s special people could not keep the Good News of Jesus to themselves. They had to give it away to other people. After all this travelling, Paul and his team arrived back at Antioch in Syria. *Have another student read Acts 14 verse 27, “When they arrived in Antioch, they gathered all the people of the church together and told them about all that God had done with them and how he had opened the way for the Gentiles to believe”.*

(10) Have Paul’s team return to Antioch in Syria, leaving some standing “Christians” everywhere they have been.

Now the church was a mixture of people with different racial and religious backgrounds. Some problems came up between people. The Council of

leaders back in Jerusalem were asked to rule on some issues – which they did, Acts 15. They were very thoughtful about how everybody would understand their decisions.

Paul and a new team were still looking forwards, to people who had never heard the gospel. His old team went off to Cyprus from Antioch. Paul left and journeyed towards Bithynia. *Have a student read Acts 16 verse 7, “When they reached the border of Mysia, they tried to go into the province of Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them”.* The team obeyed what they believed God was saying to them. They turned away to the west.

(11) Have Paul’s old team go to Cyprus. Have Paul’s new team move to the edge of Bithynia, and then west (left) towards Philippi.

After a vision from God clearly calling them, Paul’s team arrived in Philippi and later in Corinth. There were many challenges in these places, and other places around them. There was opposition. There was public debate. There were hardships and disasters. But everywhere the seed of the gospel of Jesus Christ was planted, and churches were started. Some people became believers. *Have three students read Acts 16 verses 31-33, “They answered, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your family”. Then they preached the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that very hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; and he and all his family were baptized at once”.*

(12) Have Paul’s team arrive in Philippi. Have some of the seated “not Christians” from the city, stand to join the “Christians”.

The team, with a few added to them, moved on to other cities including Corinth. There was trouble almost everywhere they went. It was not easy obeying God’s command to be witnesses everywhere. One night in Corinth God encouraged Paul by speaking to him directly. *Have three students read Acts 18 verses 9-11, “Do not be afraid, but keep on speaking and do not give up, for I am with you. No one will be able to harm you, for many in this city are my people”. So Paul stayed there for a year and a half, teaching the people the word of God”.*

(13) Have the team move on to Corinth. Have many of the seated “not Christians” stand to join them.

Threats against the Christians, and especially against Paul, grew worse and worse. Paul went back to Jerusalem to face organised opposition from the Jewish religious leaders. It ended with him being arrested. He was sent all the way to Rome. He was going to be tried by the most important court in the world. A few Christian friends met up with him when he got to Rome. Although Paul had never been there before, others had taken the Good News of Jesus. Some citizens of Rome had become believers. Paul was kept a prisoner at his own home waiting for his trial but he still served God. *Have two students read Acts 28 verses 30-31, “For two years Paul lived in a place he rented for himself, and there he welcomed all who came to see him. He preached about*

the Kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking with all boldness and freedom”.

(14) Have Paul in Rome, standing with a small group of other “Christians”. Slowly, in ones and twos, others stand to join them.

Encourage the students to look back over their ‘living’ map.

Ask, What do they notice? What can they remember of what you said?

- ☐ Where are there Christians? (Everywhere any Christians have visited).
- ☐ Who directed the movement of Christians from place to place? (God the Holy Spirit).
- ☐ What did Christians talk about wherever they went? (Jesus Christ).
- ☐ How does the map compare with Jesus’ command to his people? (He told them to go into all the world, and they have!)
- ☐ Was their work easy? (No, because of opposition and persecution).
- ☐ How did people usually show they were new believers? (By being baptized).
- ☐ Did everyone, in every place, join the Christians? (No).

But those who did were glad to be among God’s special people!



Lesson 25 **God brings everything to its climax – John**

Bible reference – **Revelation 1 verses 4- 8; 4 verses 1-10; 5 verses 1-14; 19 verses 1-10; 21 verse 1 to 22 verse 21.**

Revelation is the only book of prophecy in the New Testament. It was written at a difficult time when the Christian church was persecuted. From chapter 4 Revelation explains events at the End Times.

The story of God's special people is still going on today. Beginning in Old Testament days it goes right on through the New Testament. It is not finished yet! Revelation tells how everything will end.

- **Ask**, what did the angels promise the disciples who watched Jesus being taken up into heaven after his resurrection appearances?
(Acts 1 verse 11, "... This Jesus, who was taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way ...").

God promised Jesus will come again from heaven. Revelation tells important facts about heaven. It shows what will happen in the future when Jesus returns. God is working out his plan. It will be finished. It will succeed.

John, the fisherman-disciple of Jesus, Matthew 4 verse 21, wrote Revelation. He was exiled to the island of Patmos. He was punished because he had preached "God's word and the truth that Jesus revealed", Revelation 1 verse 9. The Spirit of the risen Jesus was with John as he worked, probably digging heavy stone. Jesus showed John these events. John wrote them down.

Divide the class into eight groups. Every group will read part of Revelation and answer two questions. The whole class can discuss their answers.

Group 1: *Have two students read, Revelation 1 verses 1-2, "This book is the record of the events that Jesus Christ revealed. God gave him this revelation in order to show his servants what must happen very soon. Christ made these things known to his servant John by sending his angel to him, and John has told all that he has seen. This is his report concerning the message from God and the truth revealed by Jesus Christ".*

- Who gave us the book of Revelation?
(God, Jesus Christ, an angel, John).
- When will the things shown in Revelation happen?
(Very soon.)

History follows God's time. We do not know the date when these things will happen, but they will. They are the next item on God's agenda. First, God's special people are sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people everywhere. Next, Jesus will come back.

Group 2: Have a student read, Revelation 1 verse 7, “Look, he is coming on the clouds! Everyone will see him, including those who pierced him. All peoples on earth will mourn over him. So shall it be!”

- Who were the people who “pierced” Jesus?
(The Roman soldiers, at the Jewish leaders’ demand).
- Why is it important Jesus comes “on the clouds”?
(Because it was what God promised through the angels.)

God can always be trusted to do exactly what he has said he will do.

Group 3: Have a student read, Revelation 4 verse 11, “Our Lord and our God! You are worthy to receive glory, honour and power. For you created all things, and by your will they were given existence and life”.

- Look earlier in the chapter and see who said these words.
(The twenty-four elders, verse 10)
- To whom did they say these words?
(God on the throne, verses 2 and 10)

The twenty four elders probably represent the twelve Old Testament patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc., and the twelve New Testament apostles – Peter, Andrew, James, John etc. These men are the “spiritual fathers” of God’s special people; the Old Testament Israel and the New Testament Christians. All worship the living God who called them to follow.

Group 4: Have two students read, Revelation 5 verses 9-10, “They sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to break open its seals. For you were killed, and by your sacrificial death you bought for God people from every tribe, language, nation and race. You have made them a kingdom of priests to serve our God, and they shall rule on the earth””.

- What event is meant here by “your sacrificial death”?
(Jesus’ crucifixion)
- In what two ways are God’s special people described?
(1. “People from every tribe, language, nation and race”,
Now made into 2. “a kingdom of priests to serve God”)

We learn in chapters 6-8 there are judgements from God written on this sealed scroll. These judgements are very bad for people but Jesus’ death makes him able to “buy” people safely from these judgements. No-one can buy their own safety, but Jesus can change anybody. All kinds of people are in his kingdom. They have been changed. They have chosen to live under Jesus’ rule.

Group 5: Have three students read, Revelation 5 verses 12-14, “and sang in a loud voice: “The Lamb who was killed is worthy to receive power, wealth, wisdom, and strength, honour, glory and praise!” And I heard every creature in heaven, on earth, in the world below, and in the sea – all living beings in the universe – and they were singing: “To him who sits on the throne and to the

Lamb, be praise and honour, glory and might, for ever and ever!" The four living creatures answered, "Amen!" And the elders fell down and worshipped".

- Where were lambs used in the Old Testament stories we have heard? (At the Passover, painting the door frames with blood. And in the temple sacrifices people made as part of their worship of God).
- Why is Jesus called "the Lamb who was killed"? (Because Jesus blood is now the protection for his chosen people. Jesus is the one who helps people come to worship God).

No wonder heaven is so excited! Everyone sings praises to God and to Jesus, the Lamb, for such a great salvation.

Group 6: Have a student read, Revelation 19 verse 1, "After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a large crowd of people in heaven, saying, "Praise God! Salvation, glory, and power belong to our God!"

- How is this "Salvation" described in verses 7-9? (As the wedding feast of the Lamb).
- Do you know the Hebrew word for "Praise God"? Can you guess? (Hallelujah!).

This chapter is the only one in the New Testament that uses the word, "Hallelujah" translated as "Praise God". Early Christians used "Hallelujah" to express their thanks to God for his goodness in saving them. Everyone is invited to Jesus' wedding in heaven. Everyone who believes he is God's Son – the Saviour God gave to the world – will be there. It will be the greatest party ever. God's special people make up the bride of Jesus Christ.

Group 7: Have two students read, Revelation 20 verses 11-12, "Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sits on it. Earth and heaven fled from his presence and were seen no more. And I saw the dead, great and small alike, standing before the throne. Books were opened, and then another book was opened, the book of the living. The dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books".

- Who do you think is the one sitting on the judgement throne? (To Cornelius, Peter preached that the judge was Jesus. Jesus is the one God appointed to be the judge of the living and the dead. Acts 10 verse 42. In Athens, Paul preached that the judge was the man God raised from the dead. Jesus will judge on the day God has chosen. Acts 17 verse 31).
- Why does John write "great and small alike" will stand and be judged? (He is saying that no-one can avoid it. Everyone is exactly the same before God).

The throne is "great" because there is nothing as majestic and awesome as it. It is "white" because it shows God's absolute purity. And it is just one throne because only one person is able to be Judge for all – Jesus!

Group 8: Have four students read, Revelation 21 verses 1-4, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and earth disappeared, and the sea vanished. And I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared and ready, like a bride dressed to meet her husband. I heard a loud voice speaking from the throne: “Now God’s home is with human beings! He will live with them, and they shall be his people. God himself will be with them, and he will be their God. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things have disappeared””.

- What three new things are mentioned in these verses?
(a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem).
- How far away from God will people be?
(No distance at all. God will be with them. His home will be with them).

There are eleven words in verse 3 that describe heaven for God’s special people. What God has been working towards will have finally come to reality. The eleven words are, “He will live with them, and they shall be his people”. “He” is “God” and “his people” means everyone who believes in Jesus.

Have the students say these words together:

- **“God will live with them, and they shall be his people”,
Revelation 21 part of verse 3.** Repeat it several times to learn it.

You *may* chose to use this summary of the whole course.

The Creator God called people to follow him. The first people chose not to. God still loved them and promised a way back for them into friendship with himself.

God called Abraham to be the father of his special people. As the family grew they forgot to honour God. Famine drove them to slavery in Egypt although God provided food for them through Joseph, the brother they had rejected. Moses led God’s people out from Egypt using the protection of a lamb’s blood.

God gave his people laws to live by. Sometimes they obeyed and sometimes they did not. God kept encouraging them through his prophets. He gave them a king when they wanted a human leader.

The human kings let God down and the people down. King David was the best of them. God promised that one day in the future a king like David would reign from his royal city, Jerusalem.

Other nations conquered Israel and Judah. The Israelites were scattered. The people of Judah were carried into exile.

After a long time God moved Cyrus to let God’s people rebuild Jerusalem.

Ezra and Nehemiah led the spiritual and civic restoration.

God was silent for 400 years except for his written Old Testament word. Most people had forgotten that. They had a system of “do’s” and “don’ts” to live by. They hoped God would accept them.

Angels announced God was entering the human race as the baby Jesus. He would live and he would die to become the Saviour for the world. Jesus death

would make people right with God. God raised Jesus from the dead to life to show His power and to show Jesus is the Saviour.

Some people who had followed Jesus in his life believed this message. They knew Jesus was more than human. They believed Jesus was God the Son in human form.

After Jesus ascended into heaven and the Holy Spirit came on to the “believers”, God’s special people began to go anywhere and everywhere telling others about this Jesus. In most places some joined them but others did not.

It was difficult. The Christians suffered persecution. Yet the story continues today. All over the world Jesus is building up his special people.

Through his apostles, and the New Testament added to the Old, God has given to all who believe the hope of life in heaven with himself. Those who believe are baptised.

The believers still witness about Jesus everywhere they can. When they meet together they eat bread and drink wine to remember Jesus death and resurrection. They look back towards the cross. And they look forward to Jesus’ coming again.

This is the Bible’s true story. Hallelujah!