

# God's Kingdom

God's people living in God's place, blessed under God's rule - enjoying the benefits and fulfilling the responsibilities - and being a blessing to the world

## **Blessed under God's rule**

**Enjoying the benefits:** life as it's supposed to be; connection and closeness to God; wholeness; harmony; healthy relationship with ourselves (how we think and feel about ourselves); healthy relationships with others (how we relate to and interact with them); beauty, life and light.








**Fulfilling the responsibilities:** accepting his definition of good and evil; living life in the way he's defined; following his instruction and direction; submitting ourselves under his rule; trusting him.







## **Being a blessing to the world**

Means: joining in with what God is doing; reflecting him; representing him; acting like him; forming the formless earth; taming the wild; ordering the chaos; creating form, structure, beauty; filling the empty earth; creating life, energy and potential; establishing God's kingdom on earth; bringing it from heaven to earth; expanding and spreading his kingdom; a worldwide kingdom, everywhere for everyone.

## **Our problem**

Is: rejecting God as king; refusing to live under his rule; rejecting the responsibilities; losing the benefits; ignoring God's definition of good and evil and making up our own; asserting ourselves over God's rule; trusting ourselves; having a sin problem; having snake-hearted instincts; forming and filling the earth with chaos, death and darkness; spiralling downwards towards self-destruction; becoming disconnected and distanced from God; needing saving from our enemies and saving from ourselves.

	<b>God's People</b>	<b>God's Place</b>	<b>Blessed Under His Rule</b>	<b>Being a Blessing</b>
 <b>Creation</b>	Humans (the man and the woman, Adam and Eve).	<p>The Garden of Eden.</p> <p>People live in the garden. God lives in the garden too. They are connected and close to him.</p>	They enjoy the benefits: they are free to eat from the Tree of Life. They must fulfil the responsibilities: they must not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.	People are made in God's image to represent and reflect him. He invites them to form and fill the earth, to expand the garden. The plan is for a worldwide kingdom everywhere for everyone.
 <b>Fall</b>	Humans (the man and the woman, Adam and Eve).	<p>The Garden of Eden.</p> <p>People are thrown out of the garden. They are disconnected and distanced from God.</p>	They eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, so lose access to the Tree of Life. Rejecting the responsibilities means losing the benefits. People are instinctively snake-hearted and have a sin problem.	They are unable to expand God's kingdom and often do the opposite. God's plan is in danger. God promises a future snake crusher.
 <b>Promise</b>	<p>Abraham's family, the Israelites.</p> <p>They are chosen by God who says they will become a great nation.</p>	<p>The Promised Land.</p> <p>God says one day they will live in a land of their own. It's not their land yet, it's the land of Canaan.</p>	God says he will bless them. The question is how God can keep this promise when people instinctively reject God as king.	God says they will be a blessing to all people. God guarantees his original plan for the world through Abraham's family.
 <b>Rescue</b>	<p>The Israelites.</p> <p>They become a great nation but are enslaved by Pharaoh.</p>	<p>The Promised Land.</p> <p>God liberates them from Egypt and they begin their journey there.</p>	God frees them from suffering under Pharaoh's rule so they can be blessed under his rule.	God frees them from being trapped building Pharaoh's kingdom so they can establish God's kingdom.
 <b>Law</b>	The Israelites.	<p>The Promised Land.</p> <p>They wander in the desert, they have not yet arrived at the land. God lives with them in the Tabernacle, a tent designed by him.</p>	The law lays out the responsibilities for them to fulfil as they live with God as king. They recognise their sinfulness and incompatibility with a holy God. Laws related to the Tabernacle, priests and sacrifices show how to be connected and close to God again.	
 <b>Land</b>	The Israelites.	<p>Israel.</p> <p>God gives them the promised land. They arrive, overcome the resistance, share it out. It is now the land of Israel.</p>	They repeatedly reject God, falling into a self-destructive spiral. They need a leader to save them from their enemies and from themselves.	
 <b>Kings</b>	The Israelites.	<p>Israel.</p> <p>They live in the land. God lives with them in the newly built Temple.</p>	God chooses King David's family to give them the kind of leadership they need. God's promises are significantly fulfilled through his son, King Solomon.	God promises a future king from David's family — a son who will build the Temple and reflect and represent God. God will establish his kingdom forever through this family.

	<b>God's People</b>	<b>God's Place</b>	<b>Blessed Under His Rule</b>	<b>Being a Blessing</b>
 <b>Split</b>	<p>The Israelites.</p> <p>The nation is torn in two.</p>	<p>Israel.</p> <p>Civil war divides the kingdom into Israel in the north and Judah in the south.</p>	<p>Most kings are bad and have the same sin problem as the people. Some kings are good but eventually die. Kings fail to lead the people in fulfilling the responsibilities and so in enjoying the benefits.</p>	<p>The question is how God can keep his promise of an eternal kingdom when most kings are bad and when the good kings die.</p>
 <b>Exile</b>	<p>The Israelites.</p> <p>The nation is reduced and scattered.</p>	<p>Israel.</p> <p>They are invaded and deported to foreign lands — Israel to Assyria, Judah to Babylon. The capital city and the Temple are destroyed.</p>	<p>The people have rejected the responsibilities and so lost the benefits. God's kingdom lies in ruin.</p>	<p>They are trapped. They are unable to spread and establish God's kingdom.</p>
 <b>Return</b>	<p>The Israelites.</p>	<p>Israel.</p> <p>A small population returns to the land. The capital city and the Temple are rebuilt.</p>	<p>There is partial restoration but things are not as good as they used to be. There is a lingering sense that this isn't the true ending of the story.</p>	
 <b>Jesus</b>	<p>Jesus.</p>	<p>God lives fully in Jesus. He is God. He is God with us.</p>	<p>Jesus fulfils the promises made to Abraham and David. He is uniquely blessed under God's rule, enjoying the benefits and fulfilling the responsibilities like no-one else has. He dies and rises again: crushing the snake; saving us from our enemies and ourselves; taking our sin; and renewing connection and closeness with God.</p>	<p>Jesus is the promised king who perfectly represents and reflects God. He spreads God's rule to the world. Through him, God establishes his kingdom. Jesus reinvites us to join in with the original plan, to join him as he expands God's kingdom to everyone everywhere.</p>
 <b>Church</b>	<p>The Church.</p> <p>A community of people from all nations brought into God's kingdom by Jesus and his Spirit.</p>	<p>God lives in his people by his Spirit. He is not just with them, he is in them. They are connected and close to him in a new way.</p>	<p>The Spirit transforms people from inside out, reforming their instincts. They are changed to enjoy the benefits like Jesus does and to fulfil the responsibilities like Jesus does.</p>	<p>The Spirit empowers the church to witness about Jesus. They expand God's kingdom to the ends of the world.</p>
 <b>Forever After</b>	<p>The Church.</p> <p>They become countless people from all nations.</p>	<p>The New Creation.</p> <p>The new earth is totally formed and filled. The garden has been expanded and upgraded into a world-covering city. People live there. God lives there too. He is with them and in them. They are permanently connected and close to him.</p>	<p>People are blessed under the rule of King Jesus. The Tree of Life continually flourishes: people enjoy full and unending kingdom benefits, life as it's supposed to be. No Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil exists: Jesus has fulfilled all kingdom responsibilities, so there is no possibility of failure.</p>	<p>Jesus returns. The plan is complete. Jesus is a blessing to all people. He permanently establishes God's kingdom. There is a worldwide kingdom everywhere for everyone, forever.</p>

# Full Summary



## Creation

The earth starts formless and empty. God forms it and fills it, establishing his kingdom on earth. God makes people in his image to act like him, to also form and fill and establish his kingdom on earth. God plants a garden, a miniature version of the kingdom intended to be spread. In it, the Tree of Life represents enjoying the benefits of God's rule and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil represents fulfilling the responsibilities. The earth is perfect but not finished. The plan is a worldwide kingdom, everywhere for everyone.



## Fall

The man and woman are tempted by a snake. They disobey God and eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Rejecting the responsibilities of God's kingdom means losing the benefits. God throws them from the Garden and they lose access to the Tree of Life. They are disconnected and distanced from God. Life becomes incomplete and fractured. With no-one to spread it, God's plan for a worldwide kingdom is threatened. God says there will be generations of tension between Team Human and Team Snake, ended by a future Snake Crusher. People have a sin problem and continue to be snake-hearted, forming and filling the earth with chaos, death and darkness.



## Promise

God chooses a man called Abraham and promises that his family: will be God's people, growing into a great nation; will live in God's place, a land of their own; will be blessed under God's rule; and will be a blessing to all people. This is the original plan. Through Abraham's family, God guarantees his plan for a worldwide kingdom.



## **Rescue**

God repeats the promise made to Abraham about his family first to his son Isaac and next to his grandson Jacob, who is renamed Israel. The family move to Egypt where they grow into a large nation, the Israelites, but then become enslaved for 400 years. God raises up Moses as a leader and liberates his people.



## **Law**

After their rescue, God appears dramatically at Mount Sinai and gives the Israelites the law. It includes the Ten Commandments and national laws. The people realise they are sinful and so are incompatible with a holy God. Moses acts as a representative between them and God. The people fail to get close to God their own way by building a golden cow. God gives them designs for a tent, the Tabernacle. They accept God's way to get close to him by building it and God moves inside. Tabernacle laws and rituals show how to be connected and close to God: priests show the need for a representative and sacrifices show the need for sin to be covered. After 40 years wandering the desert, Moses delivers a dying speech reminding them of God's promise, and the benefits and responsibilities of living under God's rule.



## **Land**

Joshua leads the Israelites into the promised land. After overcoming the resistance, the land is shared out between all the people. God's people are now in God's place, their own land. Over the years, the people repeatedly fall into a downward cycle: rejecting God; being defeated by enemies; being rescued by a heroic judge who God provides; then rejecting God again. The people desperately need a leader.

## **Kings**

The people reject God as their king by demanding a human king. First is King Saul, who rejects God and spirals downwards like the people. Next is King David who reflects and represents God. He obeys and enforces God's law, recognising this kingdom is God's kingdom. God promises David's family will be a dynasty and he will have a son who will be the kind of king that God is. This son will build God a temple as a permanent place to live. Through him, God will establish his kingdom forever. King Solomon, David's son, builds a temple and his reign is a high point of unmatched peace and prosperity. This is the most God's promises have seen fulfilment.

## **Split**

After King Solomon, civil war divides the kingdom into ten northern tribes and two southern tribes, 'Israel' in the north and 'Judah' in the south. Most kings are bad and the good kings eventually die. They need God to keep his promise, raising up a good king from David's family and establishing an eternal kingdom.

## **Exile**

The northern tribes, Israel, are taken into captivity by Assyria and disappear from history. The southern tribes, Judah, are taken into captivity by Babylon. The population is shredded to pieces. The capital city and its temple are destroyed. God's people are no longer a great nation and are no longer in their own land. God's kingdom lies in ruin.

## **Return**

After decades in captivity, the Israelites are released and return to their land. Ezra leads the rebuilding of the Temple. Nehemiah leads the rebuilding of Jerusalem's city walls. This restoration feels incomplete. The story still waits for the promised king who will fulfil God's plan and rebuild God's kingdom into the worldwide kingdom it was intended to be.

## **Jesus**

Jesus fulfils the promise made to Abraham's family and David's family. He is uniquely blessed under God's rule, enjoying the benefits and fulfilling the responsibilities. He is a blessing — the promised king who spreads God's rule to the world. Through him, God establishes his kingdom. Jesus publicly announces the arrival of God's kingdom and demonstrates power to bring it from heaven to earth. He teaches a surprising message: of heavy responsibilities and high benefits; of the kingdom looking small and weak but having disproportionate influence and value. Jesus is a surprising king who chooses victory through apparent defeat by suffering and dying on a cross. Jesus dies on the cross. He lets the Snake bite his heel; acts as our representative and our sacrifice; is disconnected and distanced from God instead of us; and takes our sin, chaos, death and darkness. Jesus comes back to life. He crushes the Snake; saves us from our enemies and ourselves; renews connection and closeness with God; and gives us his beauty, life and light. Jesus reinvites us to join in with the original plan for the world, to join him as he expands God's kingdom to everyone everywhere.

## **Church**

Jesus ascends to heaven. Soon after, on the day of Pentecost, God pours out his Spirit on his people. He now lives inside them. The Spirit empowers this community, the church, to witness about Jesus and to spread his kingdom across languages and cultures to the ends of the world. This is where we live in the story.

## **Forever After**

When Jesus returns, there will be cosmic renewal. God's plan will be complete: one man and woman in a small garden becomes countless people from all nations in a worldwide city. The Tree of Life continually flourishes, watered by a river flowing from God's throne. Connected and close to him, his people enjoy full kingdom benefits, life as it's supposed to be. No Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil exists — Jesus has fulfilled all kingdom responsibilities, so there is no possibility of failure. God's people live in God's place, blessed under his rule by King Jesus who is the blessing to the world. He will permanently establish God's kingdom, everywhere for everyone, forever.

# Recap Questions



## Creation

- 1 What does it mean to be made in God's image?
- 2 What two trees are in the garden and what do they represent?
- 3 What are the benefits the man and woman enjoy under God's rule?
- 4 What are the responsibilities the man and woman must fulfil under God's rule?
- 5 What is the status of God's kingdom after it is created?
- 6 What role does God give to the man and woman?
- 7 What is the plan for God's kingdom?



## Fall

- 1 What is sin?
- 2 What does God do to the man and woman when they sin?
- 3 How does being thrown out the garden impact the man and woman?
- 4 How does being thrown out the garden impact God's plan?
- 5 What does God say the future will look like?
- 6 What do the following generations show about people?



## Promise

- 1 Who does God make a promise to?
- 2 What are the four parts of the promise God made to him and his family?
- 3 How does each part of the promise connect to the original plan for the world?
- 4 Why does the promise introduce tension into the story?



## **Rescue**

- 1** Who are the key people the promise passes down to?
- 2** What is life like for the family in Egypt?
- 3** Which parts of God's promise are being fulfilled and which parts are not?
- 4** How does God liberate his people?



## **Law**

- 1** What is the significance of the law being given after their rescue?
- 2** What is it like when God appears at Mount Sinai?
- 3** How do the people feel about being close to God?
- 4** What role does Moses play?
- 5** How do the people attempt to get close to God and what is the result?
- 6** How does God provide a way for the people to get close to him and what is the result?
- 7** What do priests and sacrifices each show?



## **Land**

- 1** What role does Joshua play?
- 2** What happens to the land?
- 3** What is the repeating cycle that Israel fall into?
- 4** What does the pattern show about people?
- 5** To what extent are God's promises fulfilled?

## **Kings**

- 1 What is the problem with Saul, Israel's first king?
- 2 How is King David different?
- 3 What does David want to build for God and what does God promise to build for David instead?
- 4 What will David's promised son be like and what will he do?
- 5 How does King Solomon's reign represent a high point in the fulfillment of God's promises?

## **Split**

- 1 What happened to the kingdom of Israel after King Solomon?
- 2 What are the northern tribes and the southern tribes called?
- 3 Which part does King David's family belong to?
- 4 What problems do kings have in this period?

## **Exile**

- 1 Which empire takes Israel into captivity and what happened to them?
- 2 Which empire takes Judah into captivity?
- 3 What is the status of God's kingdom and God's promises at this point?

## **Return**

- 1 Which empire lets the Israelites return to their homeland?
- 2 What needs rebuilding?
- 3 Who leads each of the rebuilding projects?
- 4 Why is there a lingering sense that this isn't the end of the story?

## **Jesus**

- 1 In what ways does Jesus fulfill the promise God made to Abraham?
- 2 In what ways does Jesus fulfill the promise God made to David?
- 3 What does Jesus announce during his public life and how does he demonstrate it?
- 4 What is surprising about the kingdom message Jesus teaches?
- 5 What is surprising about Jesus as a king?
- 6 What does Jesus achieve through his death and resurrection?
- 7 What does Jesus invite us to do?

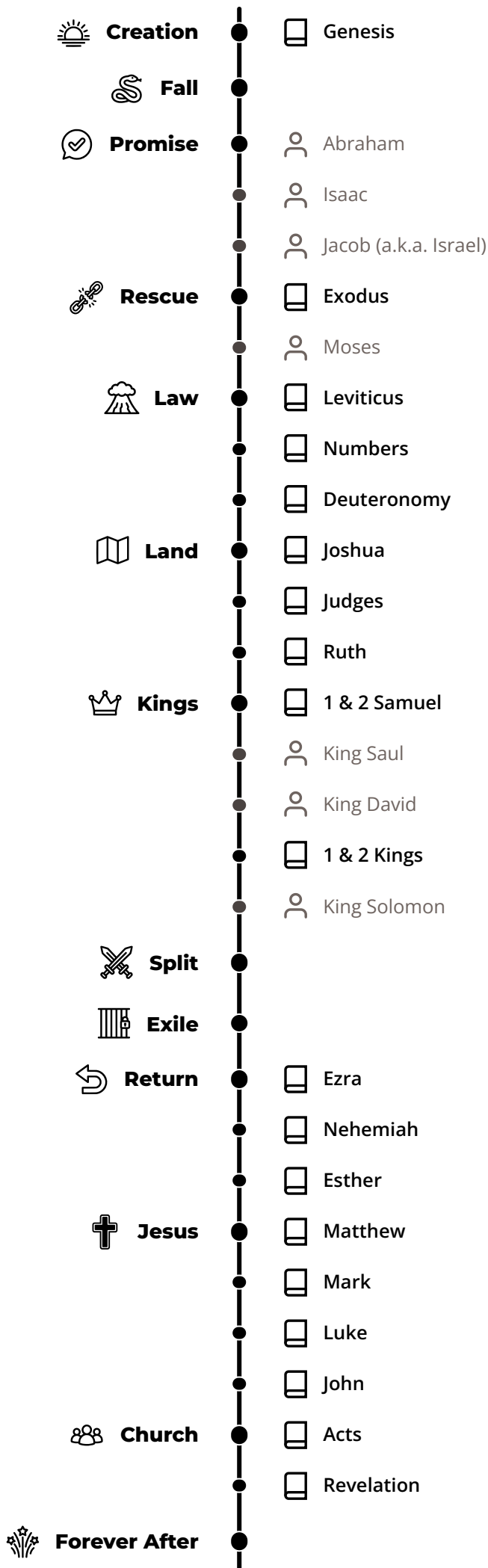
## **Church**

- 1 What happens on the day of Pentecost?
- 2 How is connection and closeness to God different than before?
- 3 What is the church?
- 4 How does the church relate to God's kingdom?
- 5 What does the Spirit empower the church to do?

## **Forever After**

- 1 When will John's vision become reality?
- 2 How is God's original plan shown to be successfully complete in the new creation?
- 3 What benefits do people enjoy under God's rule?
- 4 Why is the Tree of Life watered by a river flowing from God's throne?
- 5 Why is there no Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil?
- 6 How are all of God's promises ultimately fulfilled in King Jesus?

# Timeline



# Notes for Course Leaders

## Structuring the course

This course is designed to be run flexibly. The 13 sections can be grouped differently, depending on how many weeks you want the course to run for.

### 5 weeks

#### VIDEO HEAVY

1. Creation, Fall, Promise
2. Rescue, Law, Land
3. Kings, Split, Exile, Return
4. Jesus
5. Church, Forever After

### 7 weeks

#### BALANCED DISCUSSIONS

1. Creation, Fall
2. Promise, Rescue
3. Law
4. Land, Kings
5. Split, Exile, Return
6. Jesus
7. Church, Forever After

### 13 weeks

#### IN-DEPTH BIBLE STUDIES

1 section per week

## Structuring each week

### Recap

- Begin each week with a recap. As a group, recall the **key moments** you have covered so far in the course - the name of each section. Discuss what **God's kingdom** looks like at each moment using the four-part definition: God's people living in God's place, blessed under God's rule (enjoying the benefits and fulfilling the responsibilities), and being a blessing to the world.
- Use the **recap questions** to remind yourselves of the content you have covered so far. You could select questions from all sections, or just focus on the sections covered during the previous week.
- Watch the **recap video** connected to the first section you're looking at this week — it briefly summarises everything covered so far.

## Content

- Watch the **video** for the section.
- Have a short time of open discussion — share initial reactions or ask clarifying questions.
- Use the **discussion questions** for the section. Depending on how much time you have session and the depth of discussions, there may not be time for all of them.
- Repeat this pattern for each section being covered.

## Bible Study

- Each section includes **Bible passages** for further study — key passages directly referenced in the video or closely related to the content.
- If you are following the 13 week course (i.e. 1 section per week), use one of these passages as a Bible study during the session. This can be done either before or after the video. The suggested passage is marked with a ★. Focus on: what the story of the passage is, how it links to the overall Bible story, and how it links to the different dimensions of God's kingdom.
- As a group, you could commit to reading these passages between weeks, whatever length of course you are following.