



Stepping into God's Story – Episode Six – Jesus

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BIG IDEA – Jesus is enough, in fact he's more than enough.

scripture focus – Matthew 1:1 This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus, the Messiah, son of David, son of Abraham.

How do thousands of years of epic earth history culminate in just one person's birth, life and death? How does one life cycle of an individual on this planet effect every other human being ever born? How does all the Old Testament stories find their fulfillment in Jesus? This is how God planned it!

The climax, pinnacle and epicenter converge in Jesus. Jesus is enough, in fact he is more than enough!

The crescendo notes of the four gospels explode with one tremendous announcement – THE King has arrived!

Matthew, with savant perfection, writes in his opening volley, "This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham." In Greek, "Jesus, the Messiah, son of David, son of Abraham." Matthew 1:1

Mark, with gritty passion, writes, "This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. It began just as the prophet Isaiah had written:" Mark 1:1-2 NLT

Luke, the detailed Doctor, turned journalist, Luke gives us Jesus' entire lineage! In Luke 3:23-38 from Joseph, the carpenter, all the way back to Adam! 15 verse, a total of [76 generations](#). Yet with precision, He writes, "**Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an accurate account for you, most honorable Theophilus, so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught.**" Luke 1:1-4 NLT.

John, the theologian, assembles his eyewitness accounts unlike the other three writers, gives us facts, but they are not from a human perspective. John goes so deep; **his words shook the heavens and the earth. John 1:1-3 In the beginning**

was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. **All things were created through him**, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. Then, just a few verses later, **John puts us in Moses' sandals, seeing something Moses never saw – a moment that even Moses could not fathom.** John writes, **“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** John 1:14 ESV. **Mary saw God's face and did not die! We will see God's face and not die.**

- Jesus, A descendant of Adam, Abraham, and David.
- Jesus is the One who crushes the head of Satan, will bless all nations, and reigns forever.
- Jesus, the God-man, enters humanity through the virgin-womb of a woman, **perfectly obeys the law** that we could never obey, **dies as the once-and-for-all sacrifice** for our sins, and **rises from the dead, conquering Satan, sin, and death.**
- Jesus **inaugurates His eternal kingdom and secures salvation** for His people.

Jesus is more than enough:

- 1. The King has arrived**
- 2. His kingdom is announced.**
- 3. His kingdom is an upside-down kingdom.**
- 4. The King serves and suffers.**
- 5. The King conquers**

1. The King has arrived.

Mark 1:9-11 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. As soon as he came up out of the water, he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased.

When God's people entered into their "**rest**" and on towards the promised land – Joshua led them across the Jordan river. **Jesus is baptized in the Jordan. It's significant, it is a sign, a memory, a fulfillment all played out in the New Testament.**

Jesus being **baptized** in the Jordan means he is the one to give a true rest, a deeper rest.

2. The Kingdom is announced.

Mark 1:14-15 After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God: "**The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near.** Repent and believe the good news!"

Luke 7:18-22 Then John's disciples told him about all these things. So John summoned two of his disciples and sent them to the Lord, asking, "**Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?**" When the men reached him, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to ask you, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'" At that time **Jesus healed many people of diseases, afflictions, and evil spirits, and he granted sight to many blind people.** He replied to them, "**Go and report to John what you have seen and heard:** The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor are told the good news.

Jesus authenticates His power, His position, His proof through miraculous signs. But more than that, Jesus embodies every characteristic of every Old Testament prophet, priest and king!

We say it like this, "**The Kingdom of God is here, yet is still coming.**" We say that because, clearly Jesus announced that the Kingdom of God was near, then he said, "it is here." But we know that earth does not look like heaven yet! You know this isn't heaven, right? The fulfillment of God's Kingdom fully arriving is at the end of all things. **What is God waiting for?** Why doesn't God just end all this sin, suffering and death stuff right now? **Maybe God is waiting for someone? Maybe He's waiting for someone you love to come to Him and believe!** Maybe it's what Peter wrote in **1 Peter 3:9, The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed but wants everyone to repent.**

Even the Apostle Paul tells us that God wants all to come to the truth, "**I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf and give thanks for them. Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.**" 1 Timothy 2:1-4 NLT

3. His kingdom is an upside-down kingdom

Eric Geiger says, "Jesus will reverse the curse!"

It's not like any kingdom we've seen, or we would even create!

**Jesus chooses people that other kingdoms wouldn't choose.
Jesus chooses people that other kingdoms would reject.
Jesus chooses his disciples as uneducated, normal, average working men.**

These are people the established religious rulers looked down on!

Do you know what it feels like to be looked down on?

- Because of your family story?
- Because of the color of your skin or the language you speak?
- Because of where you were raised or how you were raised?
- Or let's be real, you feel looked down on because of choices YOU made!

God chooses us. He chooses people that would be considered as outcasts, fringe or unworthy! He chose me. He chooses you.

Choosing the twelve disciples is an object lesson of fulfillment as well because it reminds us of the choosing of the twelve tribes of Israel!

Mark 3:13-14 Jesus went up the mountain and **summoned those he wanted**, and they came to him. **He appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles to be with him, to send them out to preach...**

Jesus hung out with people that other kingdoms wouldn't have anything to do with.

This upside-down kingdom is not just about the guys that Jesus chose. It's also who Jesus decided to hang out with. He ate and hung out with both the religious and the irreligious.

Matthew 11:19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'

Jesus' **upside-down kingdom** means that He is a friend of sinners!

What does that say about us?

Q: What does that say about our view of the Kingdom of God?

Q: What does that say about our friendship circles?

Jesus' Kingdom messages were even upside-down.

The way to enter His kingdom! It was not to be strong and powerful, but to be like a child!

Matthew 18:3 "Truly I tell you, "He said, "**unless you turn and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.**"

In his signature sermon, the "[sermon on the mount](#)" was a series of upside-down points!

Blessed are those...

Who are poor? Mourn? Meek? Hungry? Merciful? Pure? Peacemakers? Persecuted? Refiled and spoken evil of?

What kind of pep talk was this?

And the people loved it! Why? Because it describes the life of difficulties and struggles to be good.

Mathew chapters 5-7 are the antibodies to diseased soul!

No wonder people generally like Jesus, but do not like religion or religious entities!

Jesus speaks to the secrets of our heart, and we can't ignore Him.

4. The King in this kingdom serves and suffers.

Matthew 21:4-5 This took place so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled: Tell Daughter Zion, "See, **your King is coming to you, gentle, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**" Prophecies from **Isaiah 62:11 & Zechariah 9:9**

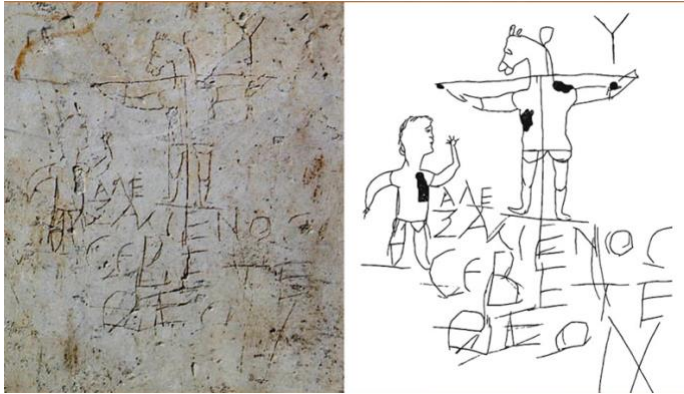
The people wanted their king riding in on a great white horse, like a conqueror, not like a humble servant.

Matthew 27:35-37 After crucifying him, they divided his clothes by casting lots., Then they sat down and were guarding him there. Above his head they put up the charge against him in writing: **This Is Jesus, the King of the Jews.**

They were all mocking him, but it was absolutely true!

No king would willingly go to his death, innocent of the charges brought against him.

Discovered graffiti drawing by a soldier mocking the crucified Christ, entitled [Alexamenos worships his God](#).



That's humiliating to die that way! Who would follow one that would allow themselves to be subjected to that treatment? That is offensive! The Apostle Paul said the cross is foolishness to the those heading away from God, and it is stumbling block to the Jews! 1 Corinthians 1:18 & 23

5. The King conquers.

This most unusual King and this upside-down Kingdom seemingly ends in complete and utter disaster. The King dies and His followers in this new promised Kingdom – scatter!

Luke 18:31-33 Then he took the Twelve aside and told them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. **Everything that is written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. For he will be handed over to the Gentiles, and he will be mocked, insulted, spit on; and after they flog him, they will kill him, and he will rise on the third day.**"

The King died once, for all, so that we might live and never die!

The King came back to life, so that we too will be raised from an early death to an eternal life with God.

Jesus was killed on a Friday and on a Sunday, He walked out of the tomb!

I tell you the truth! Jesus is enough, in fact he's more than enough.

- **Jesus is greater than Adam** – Adam failed; Jesus succeeded.
- **Jesus is greater than Abraham** – Abraham left his land and family; Jesus left heaven to gain for us a new life, a new heaven and earth.

- **Jesus is greater than Moses** – Moses rescued Israel out of slavery; Jesus rescued all humankind out of the slavery of sin.
- **Jesus is greater than Joshua** – Joshua brings the people into the promised land of rest; Jesus will bring us into His promised Kingdom to be reunited with God forever.
- **Jesus is greater than David** – David was the conquering king; Jesus conquers our enemy, the liar, deceiver – Satan and evil, but also death and hell.
- **Jesus is greater than all the prophets** – the prophets brought both warnings and promises of hope; Jesus fulfilled every one of their predictions and promises.

Jesus comes to fulfill all the promises of God. To do for us what we could never do for ourselves!

This same Jesus is here! This King, and His Kingdom is here and yet still arriving.

- Do you believe in Jesus as your King?
- Do you have faith in His Kingdom coming and His final **will** becoming a reality?
- Do you see God pursuing you, choosing you for His upside-down Kingdom?

NOTES

Scriptures

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Week 6 Teaching Outline

JESUS

In this week's time together, we reach the story's climactic peak—everything has been leading to Jesus. The plot twist that nobody fully anticipated had been written into the story from the beginning. A descendant of Adam, Abraham, and David, Jesus is the One who crushes the head of Satan, will bless all nations, and reigns forever. Jesus, the God-Man, enters humanity through the womb of a virgin, perfectly obeys the law that we could never obey, dies as the once-and-for-all sacrifice for our sins, and rises from the dead, conquering Satan, sin, and death. He inaugurates His eternal kingdom and secures salvation for His people.

What the Gospels reveal about Jesus:

1. **The King has arrived.**
2. **His kingdom is announced.**
3. **His kingdom is upside-down.**
4. **The King serves and suffers.**
5. **The King conquers.**

How the Bible's story points to Jesus:

1. **Jesus is greater than Adam.**
2. **Jesus is greater than Abraham.**
3. **Jesus is greater than Moses.**
4. **Jesus is greater than David.**
5. **Jesus is greater than all the prophets.**

Personal Study

The passages you will study this week chronicle events that happened during the period of history we covered in the Session 5 teaching. God's people were united under King David and enjoyed a season of peace and prosperity. But David's son, Solomon, compromised his devotion to God and pursued the gods of his wives and concubines. The nation spiraled down spiritually. God sent prophets to warn the people of coming judgment if they did not turn back, but the people did not heed the warnings. So just as God had promised, He removed His people from the land because of their idolatry. But God did not abandon them during their exile. As prophesied, God's people returned to their land. However, their hearts were still not fully committed to Him, thus the need for the coming Messiah.

WHERE WE'VE BEEN: EXILE AND RETURN

Solomon takes foreign wives and allows their foreign gods to clutter the land. His son continues the line of rulers and the kingdom is divided into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah). Prophets confront the people but they persist in their idolatry. The Northern Kingdom falls to Assyria and the Southern Kingdom is carried away into Babylonian captivity. When they are freed, they return to a nation and kingdom far less glorious than before and are still unable to keep their promises.

WHERE WE'RE HEADED: JESUS

A descendant of Adam, Abraham, and David, Jesus is the One who crushes the head of Satan, will bless all nations, and reigns forever. Jesus, the God-Man, enters humanity through the womb of a virgin, perfectly obeys the law that we could never obey, dies as the once-and-for-all sacrifice for our sins, and rises from the dead, conquering Satan, sin, and death. He inaugurates His eternal kingdom and secures salvation for His people.

DAY ONE: Elijah & the Gods

Read 1 Kings 18.

This passage tells an incredible story that highlights the difference between God and the gods that the people were tempted to worship. Elijah, a prophet of God, issued a challenge to 450 prophets of a false little-g god named Baal. Elijah issued the challenge: "Let's find out whose god is God. You pray to your god, to Baal. I will pray to my God, Yahweh, the self-existing One. The god who answers by fire is really God. You guys go first."

So the 450 prophets of Baal danced around the fire for hours. They cut themselves, screamed, worshiped, and begged their god to light the altar on fire. “Baal, answer us!”

Elijah threw down some ancient smack talk. “Shout a little louder,” he cried. “Maybe your god is sleeping. I wonder why he cannot hear you?”

But there was no sound. No one answered. No one paid attention.

Then, Elijah stepped up and asked for water to be poured all over the altar because He knew what would happen. He knew that his God hears, and his God answers. Elijah asked for more water to be put on the altar so it would be clear that God is the One who sent the fire. No one would be able to say that the fire happened because two rocks rubbed together and created a spark or the sun caught a blade of grass on fire. The water was added so it would be absolutely clear that God had answered. After Elijah prayed, fire came from heaven, consumed the altar, and licked up all the water on the ground.

Our God hears. Elijah wanted the people to understand how foolish it is to worship idols that cannot hear and gods that are powerless. Sadly, the people as a whole, even after this moment, continued to worship and pursue gods rather than the one true God.

The things of this life we are tempted to pursue are powerless to save us, too. They are powerless to give us true life. God is the only One who can answer with fire.

Q: What are some things of the world that you have foolishly pursued? What was the result of your pursuit?

Q: How have you seen God do things in your life that only He could do?

DAY TWO: Daniel

Some people see living in America as living in a Christian nation, perhaps similar to the state of the nation of Israel during King David's reign. Under David's leadership, the people feared God and were united. But if you want to make a comparison between life as believers in the United States and life in the Old Testament for God's people, a more accurate comparison would be the period of Israel's Babylonian captivity. Like that time period, we are living in a time that is more and more secular and more and more tolerant of everything—of everything except people who insist that their belief system is absolute. So how should we live? Daniel's friends provide an example.

Daniel 3 tells the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, but these were not their real names. The king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, had besieged Jerusalem, taken the people into captivity, and given them new names and new jobs. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego tolerated the new jobs and new names, trusting God's plan for them in a new culture. But in Daniel 3, the king asked them to do something they were unwilling to do. He announced that every person must bow down and worship a 90-foot gold statue that he had erected. He set up an orchestra and told the people that as soon as the music started, they must bow down to worship the image. Anyone who did not worship the image would be cast into a fiery furnace. The temptation presented to the three Israelite young men was not to stop worshiping God, but to also worship the king's god, too.

Q: How do we face a similar temptation? Explain.

The idols of this world aren't asking us to give up our worship of God, just add them to the mix. But because God is the only true God, He says we must only worship Him.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow. King Nebuchadnezzar was furious, scolded them, and offered them another chance. They let him know that they, of course, did not need a second opportunity. They believed that God was able to rescue them, but if He chose not to, they still would not bow. What faith! So Nebuchadnezzar threw them into the furnace, a furnace so hot that it killed the soldiers who threw them in.

Read Daniel 3:24-30.

Was it Christ who jumped in the fire with them? We're not sure. Theologians have debated whether this was Christ (who has always existed) or an angel. Regardless, after pulling the guys from the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar admitted, "There is no other god who is able to deliver like this" (Dan. 3:29).

In the pagan Babylonian culture, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were willing to work new jobs and take new names. But they were not willing to bow to another god.

When the prophet Jeremiah wrote to God's people living in Babylon, he instructed them to build houses, plant gardens, live, and to even pray for the welfare of Babylon (Jer. 29:4-7). So living in Babylon, based on God's instructions, meant caring for people there and seeking the welfare of the city. But it also meant not compromising their commitment to God.

God put you in your career, your job, and your neighborhood. Live there. Pray for the people God has surrounded you with. Work hard. Do all you can for the welfare of those around you. As you do so, only bow to Him.

Q: In what ways are you tempted to bow down to other gods? Explain.

DAY THREE: God In the Story of Esther

A king's heart is like channeled water in the LORD's hand: He directs it wherever he chooses.

Proverbs 21:1

The Book of Esther does not mention God by name. But since God is the center of the Bible Story, how can there be a book that does not mention His name? Some say His name is intentionally not used in the book to show that He is still in charge, even when we don't see Him. Regardless, in the Book of Esther, we learn that we must not mistake God's silence for His absence. Often, He is working behind-the-scenes, directing events and implementing His plans.

In the timeline, the story of Esther occurs after God's people have been taken into Babylonian captivity. The Persians conquered the Babylonians and set the Jews free to return home. But many stayed, continuing to live in a land that was not their own, under the rule of a Persian king. The Book of Esther opens with a massive feast held by the Persian king Xerxes. He threw a 180-day party concluding with a seven-day feast. Everyone was drunk, and Xerxes decided to show off his pretty wife, Vashti. He sent for her to come wearing her crown, to show off her beauty.

She refused. The king was livid, and his counselors advised him to divorce his wife and ban her from his presence. After all he was king, and no one could treat him that way. The whole point of the feast was to show off his power, yet he did not have power over his own wife. So he banned Vashti, his wife, from his presence, and launched a search throughout the royal provinces for a new queen.

Mordecai and his beautiful cousin Esther lived in one of the provinces. When Esther's parents died, Mordecai adopted her as his own daughter. During the search for a queen, she was taken into Xerxes' harem where other virgins were preparing to go before the king. Each day, Mordecai walked by the court where Esther stayed and talked with her. He encouraged her to conceal her nationality and family background as she hoped to be the next queen of Persia. Eventually Esther was summoned before the king, and he was blown away with her beauty. He loved her more than any of the others and made her his queen.

After Esther became queen, Mordecai happened to overhear a plot to assassinate the king. Mordecai told Esther who then told Xerxes, giving due credit to Mordecai. Mordecai had saved the king, but his reward was overlooked.

At this point in the story, a new character is introduced: Haman. He was promoted to a high position, right at the place in the story where we would expect to find a report of Mordecai's promotion. This turn of events does not seem fair. Haman was promoted and not Mordecai? What is going on here? All the officials bowed down and paid honor to Haman except Mordecai. This infuriated Haman, and he devised a plan to destroy not only Mordecai, but all the Jews.

Esther had been queen for five years when Haman reported to the king that a certain ethnic group (the Jews) did not obey the king's laws. He told the king that it was not in the king's best interest to tolerate such behavior and that this group should be eliminated. Xerxes gave Haman full authority to do as he pleased, and Haman moved forward with his plan. He drew up the order in the first month of the year that instructed the officials in all the provinces to annihilate the Jews in the last month of the year. When Mordecai heard the news, he mourned in sackcloth and ashes.

After Esther tried to get him to cease his mourning, Mordecai sent word to her about what was happening, with a command for her to go to the king. He told her to seek the king's favor and plead for her people. This frightened Esther. She sent word back to Mordecai explaining that she no longer routinely saw Xerxes, which was likely typical for a king with many concubines. She couldn't go to the king uninvited without risking her life. Unless he extended his scepter as a sign of grace, she would be killed on the spot. Mordecai told her that she would face death regardless, and that perhaps she had been placed in this position "for such a time as this" (Esth. 4:14).

To save her people, Esther had to risk her life before the king and before Haman. She requested that Mordecai have everyone fast for her before she made her appearance. When she walked into the king's presence, he accepted her and offered her anything she wanted up to half the kingdom. She simply asked for he and Haman to attend a banquet. In the meantime, Haman had built massive gallows on which to hang Mordecai because he still refused to bow before Haman.

At the first banquet, Esther did not reveal her request, but at the second one she told the king that she and her people were to be killed. Xerxes' honor was offended that someone would make such plans. When he found out Haman devised the plan and used his authority for the decree, he walked out of the room in a rage. The gallows Haman had built for Mordecai were used on

Haman. And because Haman was executed as a traitor, his property was confiscated and given to Esther.

The king's signet ring which had previously been given to Haman was given to Mordecai. The ring vested Mordecai with the power and authority previously given to Haman. The former heinous decree could not be dismissed, but Esther and Mordecai were given power and authority to write another one to counteract Haman's decree. They decreed that Jews could take whatever measures were necessary to defend themselves. In the armed conflict, the Jews struck down those who hated them. They were victorious.

This fight was the foundation of a Jewish holiday, one that exists to this day, Purim.

Passover celebrates the deliverance of the Jews through extraordinary events. Purim celebrates the survival of the Jews through ordinary events.

The author of Esther was teaching God's people that sometimes God quietly works behind the scenes for their benefit. The Passover remembers a time when God delivered His people from Egyptian captivity through very visible and awe-inspiring miracles such as the plagues. In Esther, God is the silent yet sovereign King, orchestrating events and working behind the scenes to rescue His people.

God is working in the ordinary details of your life, too. He is still the sovereign King using great and small things to accomplish His purposes.

Q: How have you seen God work behind the scenes in your ordinary life?

DAY FOUR: Malachi & Your Worship

Malachi is a "post-exilic" prophet (along with Haggai and Zechariah), meaning he was a messenger to God's people after they returned from Babylonian exile. While the people had returned and were worshiping God again, their worship was out of duty rather than delight. The priests were offering God leftover animals and not bringing their best to Him.

Read Malachi 1:6-14.

According to Leviticus 22, priests were to only bring pure and unblemished animals to sacrifice to God. But now, the priests were offering God blind and diseased animals. God essentially said that their employer (their governor) would fire them if they had offered him what they were offering God. God preferred no offering in comparison to a half-hearted, going-through-the-motions type of offering.

Some struggle with God's insistence on being worshiped, as if this makes God like the insecure guy at the office who constantly fights for attention. But the guy at the office acts that way because he is deficient in his character. There is nothing deficient in God's character. He passionately pursues His own worship because there is nothing greater for Him to pursue. Three thoughts to consider:

GOD MUST BE WORSHIPED.

Notice Malachi 1:11. God's name will be great among the nations. God was declaring that He would find worshipers from every nation. And He does.

Christ was sacrificed to rescue people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. He pursues worshipers from outside of Israel—including you! And He is always worshiped. When you slept last night, someone on the other side of the world was worshiping.

If God did not desire and demand worship, He would not be God. If there were something more excellent, more beautiful, and more praiseworthy than God, then that thing would be God. But there is nothing better, nothing more amazing than Him. He stands alone.

WE WILL WORSHIP.

The people God was addressing hadn't stopped worshipping; they had just stopped worshipping Him. They viewed something else as greater than God. Maybe they longed for comfort and wanted the best meat for themselves. Perhaps security was their god, offering God the cheap lambs so they could sell the better ones to get more money. You don't have to be taught to worship. You are always giving value and worth to something or someone. But God alone is Master and Father, and anything else we worship is less than Him.

THUS, HIS COMMANDS TO WORSHIP HIM ARE GRACIOUS INVITATIONS.

These words in Malachi are very strong. But when we understand that God must be worshiped and we must worship, we realize that God pursuing our worship is good for us. His commands to worship Him are gracious invitations because He is commanding us to find ultimate joy.

The Old Testament ends during this period of time. Nehemiah rebuilt the wall, but the people could not keep their commitments. The exiles were back in the land but were now offering God leftover sacrifices. While some have been faithful, the overarching trend of God's people was a failure to worship God alone. They needed a Rescuer. So do we. Malachi prophesied that the Rescuer is coming.

See, I am going to send my messenger, and he will clear the way before me. Then the Lord you seek will suddenly come to his temple, the Messenger of the covenant you delight in—see, he is coming," says the LORD of Armies.

Malachi 3:1

The messenger who clears the way will be John the Baptist. Christ is the Messenger of the new covenant—a new promise that will include people from every nation.

He is also the mediator of the new covenant as He brings us to Himself through His death on the cross. The Old Testament ends with people desperate for the One who will change our disobedient hearts. The Old Testament ends with a longing for a new King, a better King.

Q: Do you find yourself worshiping and serving God out of duty or delight? Explain.

Group Questions

Discussion Guide

1. Share a quick summary of highlights from Weeks 1–5. Why is this week an important point in redemptive history and the unfolding story of God?
2. How does the introduction of Jesus differ in the four Gospels? Why are these differences important for us today?
3. Eric pointed out five things the Gospels reveal about Jesus. How might your understanding of the “good news” change if something was left out?
4. What does the phrase “kingdom of God” mean?
5. How do Jesus’ miracles point to the kingdom of God?
6. What did Eric mean when he said that Jesus’ kingdom is an upside-down kingdom? Explain.

Read Matthew 18:3 aloud.

“Truly I tell you,” he said, “unless you turn and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 18:3

7. Why do we have to become like children to enter the kingdom of God? Why is this difficult for some of us?
8. How do people misunderstand the sacrifice of Jesus? Why is the cross so offensive to some?

9. How would you explain that the whole story of the Old Testament points to Jesus?

10. How can a person's heart be changed? Explain.

Look back over the personal study.

11. What was especially meaningful or helpful in understanding the story of God and your life with Christ?

- Day 1: Elijah & the Gods
- Day 2: Daniel
- Day 3: God In the Story of Esther
- Day 4: Malachi & Your Worship
- Day 5: Reflection

12. How does the takeaway affect your view of Scripture? How will you respond to this part of the story?

8-week overview

CREATION AND FALL

The self-sufficient and eternal God lovingly creates a perfect creation with humanity as His crowning work. Falling for Satan's temptation, humanity rebels and sin enters the world bringing death, pain, and strife. Instead of giving up on humanity, God promises that from the womb of a woman will come the One who will crush Satan's head.

PROMISE AND A PEOPLE

God pursues Abraham, a man from an idol-worshiping family who has no children with his wife and promises that he will be the father of many nations. God promises land to Abraham and assures him that all nations will be blessed through his offspring. God continues to be faithful to this family. He restates the promise to Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob (who is renamed Israel). A famine strikes the promised land, so Jacob and the family move to Egypt where one of Jacob's sons, Joseph, is already there to provide for the family.

RESCUE AND LAW

The family becomes a nation while living in Egypt, but also becomes enslaved to the Egyptians. God raises up Moses to lead His people to freedom. During a tenth plague, God strikes dead the firstborn son of everyone living in Egypt, but "passes over" Israel as they put the blood of lambs on their doorposts. After miraculously rescuing His people, God gives His people the law. He also instructs them to build a tabernacle and offer sacrifices so He may dwell among them.

LAND AND KINGDOM

God brings His people, through their leader Joshua, into the promised land. When God's people worship the gods of the nation's surrounding them, God disciplines them through the attacks of surrounding nations. God raises up judges (or rulers) to rescue His people and call them to repentance. They beg for a king to be like other nations, and God gives them Saul. God raises up a new king, David, and promises that his kingdom will never end. The family that turned into a nation is now a kingdom. David's son, Solomon, builds a temple to replace the tabernacle.

EXILE AND RETURN

Solomon takes foreign wives and allows their foreign gods to clutter the land. His son continues the line of rulers, and the kingdom is divided into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah). Prophets confront the people, but they persist in their idolatry. The Northern Kingdom falls to Assyria and the Southern Kingdom is carried away into Babylonian captivity. When they are freed, they return to a nation and kingdom far less glorious than before and are still unable to keep their promises.

JESUS

A descendant of Adam, Abraham, and David, Jesus is the One who crushes the head of Satan, will bless all nations, and reigns forever. Jesus, the God-Man, enters humanity through the womb of a virgin, perfectly obeys the law that we could never obey, dies as the once-and-for-all sacrifice for our sins, and rises from the dead, conquering Satan, sin, and death. He inaugurates His eternal kingdom and secures salvation for His people.

A NEW PEOPLE

After His ascension to heaven, Jesus sends the promised Holy Spirit and His disciples turn the world upside down preaching the good news of Jesus. In the midst of intense persecution, the gospel spreads, and Gentiles and Jews form a new people. Churches are planted in cities, and apostles write letters encouraging and instructing the people in the grace of Christ and their response to His grace.

A BETTER BEGINNING

A time is coming where God's people—people from every tribe, tongue, and nation who have been rescued by Christ—will enjoy Him and His rule forever in perfect harmony. Satan will be crushed, the effects of sin will be reversed, and all things will be made new.

This first week will ease you into the story with just four scriptures setting the stage for our epic journey. Weeks 2–8 will dive deeper into each day's personal study. Ideally, you'll have time to read one passage of Scripture each day for four

days leading up to the first group session, plus one day of personal reflection. If you don't have the full week or you didn't receive your book in advance, that's OK—read what you can before your first discussion begins.