

## First Steps 4

What is the Story of the Bible?



*Consider: Other than First Steps, have you ever read the Bible? What are your impressions of the Bible?*

Christianity places a very high degree of importance on the Bible. Christians look to the Bible to understand who God is, what his nature and character are like, how a Christian is supposed to live their life, and the purpose of life in general.

The Bible was written between 2,000 and 3,600 years ago by over 40 different authors, all of whom were guided by the Holy Spirit as they wrote. The Bible answers important questions, such as: Where did the world come from? Has the world always been this way? Is there hope for the world? Is there a purpose and hope for my life? Answering these questions reveals how the Bible tells the story of God's plan to rescue his beloved creation.

The story of God and mankind is the "big picture" of the Bible. Let's look at this story highlighted throughout the Bible.

### Part 1: Creation



#### **Genesis 1:1, 31**

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.*

Before everything was anything, God existed. God made everything out of nothing. God made the heavens--the stars, sun, moon and galaxies. God made the earth--full of beauty, complex design and diversity. All of God's creation was perfect. There was no death, evil, pain, disease or suffering. And in all of the creation God had made, humans were made special.



#### **Genesis 1:27-29**

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food."*

Life was good. Life was with God. Life was eternal.

(This story of God's creation can be read in Genesis Chapters 1 and 2.)

### Part 2: Fall

We are intended to read Genesis Chapters 1 and 2 with a sense of wonder and joy. After all, the world we are reading about was ideal, without blemish, and God lived among man in perfect harmony. However, what happens next is a big change from perfect harmony. Genesis Chapter 3 is intended to be read with a sense of loss and sobriety. What was once perfect, became fractured.



#### **Genesis 2:15-17**

*The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you should not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die."*



#### **Genesis 3:4-6**

*But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruits and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.*

Note: The woman in Genesis 3 is Eve, and her husband is Adam, the first woman and man ever created. The serpent in Genesis 3 is the devil. Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command to not eat the fruit; disobeying God is a "sin".

Sin changed everything. The Bible tells us that we sin when we are "lured and tempted by our own desires." The tree, while desirable and good for food, was forbidden by God. This sinful act by Adam and Eve brought sin into the world, and man's relationship with the holy God was broken. When man's relationship with God went from unblemished to blemished, all of creation was marred. Sin, death, disease, disaster, pain, suffering and all kinds of evil, fractured a world that was once perfect.

God, in his great mercy and love, made a promise to restore and renew all of his creation.



**Genesis 3:15**

*"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

This promise was the first of many prophecies of a coming savior. He would be a human, and through his own wound, he would defeat the serpent and rescue mankind. This savior was known as the "Messiah" or "Christ." From this point on, God's people began to anticipate the coming of the Messiah who would restore humanity to God and fix fallen creation.

(This story of the fall of mankind can be read in Genesis Chapter 3.)



*Consider: What signs of brokenness do you see in the world today?*

### Part 3: Israel



**Romans 5:12**

*"...just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned..."*



**Genesis 12:1-3**

*Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

The effects of sin and death infected every member of the human race. In order to save all people God chose one man, Abram (later named Abraham), through whose family he would send the Messiah.

God blessed Abraham, and his family grew into a large nation called Israel. God referred to Israel as "his people" and set them apart from all other nations.

God gave Israel the Law to show them how to live.

God gave Israel a temple to show them how to draw close to him.

God gave Israel a system of animal sacrifices to show them how sin must be dealt with by death.

But, as God knew:

The Law only exposed Israel's sinful condition; the Law could not fix it.

The temple only allowed one man to approach God, once per year; the temple could not restore life with God.

The sacrifices only reminded Israel of their sinful condition; the sacrifice requirements were never-ending and incapable of permanently cleansing the people's sin.



**Hebrews 10:1-4**

*For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been*

*cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*

God would soon remedy sin and its effects once and for all...

(The story of Israel can be read in Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Ezra and Nehemiah.)



*Consider: How have you tried to fix, cope, or avoid the brokenness that you feel and see in this world?*

Just like Israel experienced, the process of trying to fix and solve problems on our own is never-ending. If we avoid problems, clean ourselves up, or pretend we are feeling things other than what our hearts truly feel, the process is tiresome, weary, and impossible to sustain. Israel was waiting for a savior and we need one too.

## Part 4: The Messiah

At last, at the perfect time, God sent his Son, in the form of a man, born as a baby. The baby was given the name Jesus. He was called Christ, or Messiah.

Unlike every human who has ever lived before or since, Jesus lived a perfect life according to God's Law. Jesus never sinned.

Jesus was the perfect Israelite, the perfect human. He came to accomplish and fulfill the old prophecies foretold about the coming Messiah centuries earlier. In fact, seven hundred years before he was born, Jesus' birth was prophesied.



### **Isaiah 53:5-6**

*But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all...*

Jesus the Messiah came to fix the root cause of death: sin. Remember the story in First Steps 3 about the guest who visited your home and could not or was unwilling to remove his muddy boots? In the same way, we have impurities and spiritual dirtiness that need to be removed before we can enter into a personal relationship with God. However, unlike our shoes, we cannot remove these impurities on our own. Only Jesus can take away our impurities, which is our sin. Jesus removes our sin so that we can approach God, who is pure and holy, and be reconciled to him.



### **1 Peter 2:24**

*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

In this way the Messiah defeated sin with his death. With sin defeated, death lost its power and Jesus rose victoriously from the dead, never to die again. Jesus was the first to be free from sin and death. And all who unite themselves to Jesus through faith in him will also be free from sin and death.



### **1 Corinthians 15:22-23**

*For as in Adam [the first man] all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.*

(The story of the Messiah can be read in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.)

## Part 5: The Church and Restoration

Now, after Jesus' resurrection, those who believe in him are spiritually reborn. Everyone who believes in Jesus is a member of God's new humanity, God's new Israel--his new people called the Church.



### **1 Peter 2:9-10**

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

The church began after Jesus' resurrection and ascension into heaven, and continues to this day. The church, as God's people in Christ, is tasked with spreading the good news of the gospel throughout the world.

Jesus' resurrection began the spiritual "new creation," which takes place in the hearts and lives of Christians (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). In the future, we anticipate heaven and earth will be recreated and man will once again live with God--this will be the completion of God's new creation.

Jesus ascended into heaven, but he is coming back soon! The first time Jesus came into this world, it was humbly as a baby. However, the second time he comes, it will be as the victorious King.

When Jesus returns, he will raise those who have died from the dead, and proceed to judge all people who have ever lived, based upon their belief in him. Those who rejected Jesus in their lives will be cast into eternal death, and those who believed in Jesus will live in the new creation with God forever.



### **Revelation 21:1-5**

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."*

Note: The previously quoted verse in Revelation 21 is a true vision of the future seen by Jesus' apostle, John.

God's creation will finally be restored to perfection, and neither sin nor death will ever exist again. Once more, mankind will live with God in perfect harmony, to the praise and glory of God.

Life will be with God. Life will be eternal. Life will be good for those who are in Christ Jesus.

(The story of the church and restoration can be read in Acts and Revelation.)



*Consider: How have you seen God working in your life and leading you toward restoration through him?*

You are not studying First Steps by accident. The very fact that you are studying these materials show that God is seeking you and putting people in your life to point you toward truth. This world is broken but God wants to rescue and restore you.

In summary, the Bible tells us the truth about God, the world, ourselves, sin, and salvation in Jesus Christ. Do not think that you must read or study the entire Bible before you become a Christian. Anyone can draw near to God through faith in Jesus Christ right now. If you have faith in Christ take the step to become a Christian now! You will continue to learn about God's truth through the Bible for your entire Christian life.

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To prepare for "First Steps: Step 5," take some time this week to familiarize yourself with the lesson. Also, if there is time, read about Christians in the Bible in the book of Acts.