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## 4. The Fall and Promises of a Savior

*As 75-year-old Abram packed his bags, his family thought he was crazy. He had received a vision from God, saying “Leave your country; your people and your father’s household, and go to the land I will show you.” His family and friends asked, “Why? Why you; why now? Are you sure this wasn’t just some crazy dream?” But Abram was very sure, because in that vision God had also given him a promise so wonderful he could scarcely believe it. “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you. . . .and one day, through your descendants, all nations on earth will be blessed.” It was the unlikeliest of promises, especially when made to a childless 75-year-old man whose wife was infertile. And yet, against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and set out for the land of Canaan.*

*As 80-year-old Abram lay awake in his tent, he began to wonder if he was indeed crazy. He wasn’t getting any younger, and since the vision 5 years ago, his wife Sarai had shown no sign of being pregnant. How could God’s promise possibly be fulfilled? As Abram tossed and turned, unable to sleep, suddenly the Lord appeared to him a second time. “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.” God then led Abram outside, where a dazzling array of stars winked down from the dark Near Eastern sky. “Count the stars – if indeed you can count them. So shall your offspring be. . . .”*

*As 100-year-old Abraham held his newborn son in his arms, tears rolled down his cheeks. God had kept his promise after all, and had brought about a miracle that anybody on earth would have said was impossible. As Abraham looked at the baby in his arms, his heart swelled with hope that God would keep the rest of his promises too. The promise of a land to call his own. The promise of a mighty nation made up of his own descendants. And above all, the promise of another baby boy, who would come to save his people from their sin.*

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***(adapted from Genesis 12 and 15)***

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This lesson focuses on the origin of sin, God’s gracious plan of salvation, and the way he made that plan known to his people throughout the period we have come to call “The Old Testament.”

# WHERE DID SIN COME FROM, AND WHAT DID GOD DO ABOUT IT?

If God created a perfect world, then where did sin come from? It didn't originate with God, but was brought into the world by a fallen angel called Satan, or the devil. (Revelation 12:7-9.) He came to the garden in the form of a serpent and convinced Adam and Eve to rebel against God.

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*Read Genesis 2:15-3:7.*

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**Romans 5:12** *Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin.*

**Romans 8:22** *We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.*

God's perfect world was now broken, but he refused to destroy it and start over. Instead, as soon as Adam and Eve fell into sin, God revealed his plan to save them.

**Lamentations 3:22** *Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed.*

**Ezekiel 33:11** *As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.*

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*Read Genesis 3:8-24.*

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Genesis 3:15 is a particularly special verse. With this single promise, God vowed to both restore mankind's relationship with God and destroy the work of Satan.

**Genesis 3:15** *The Lord God said to the serpent... "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."*

Take a closer look at the verse, and identify to whom each pronoun is referring:

"I"	"he"
"you"	"your"
"your offspring"	"you"
"hers"	"his"

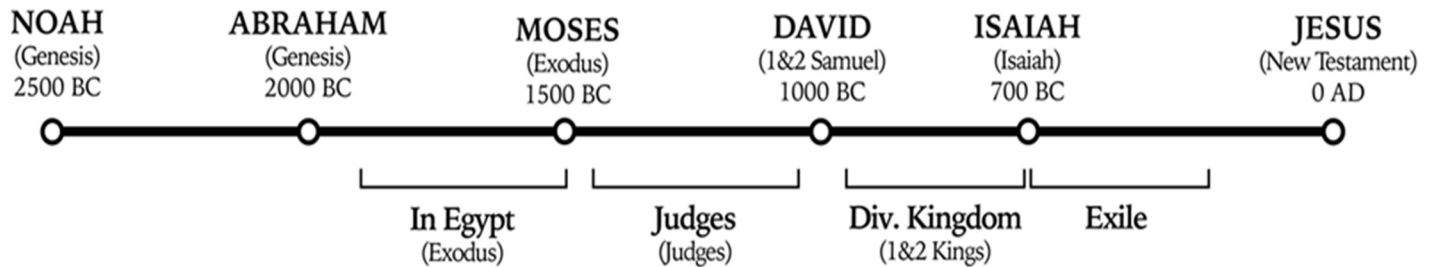
God promises a human, singular, male descendant, with the power to defeat the devil. The only person who fits this description is \_\_\_\_\_.

**1 John 3:8** *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*

# WHAT IS THE OLD TESTAMENT?

God had promised that a special **person** would come from Adam and Eve’s family. God eventually made that family into a **people**, or nation. The **Old Testament** is the history of that nation.

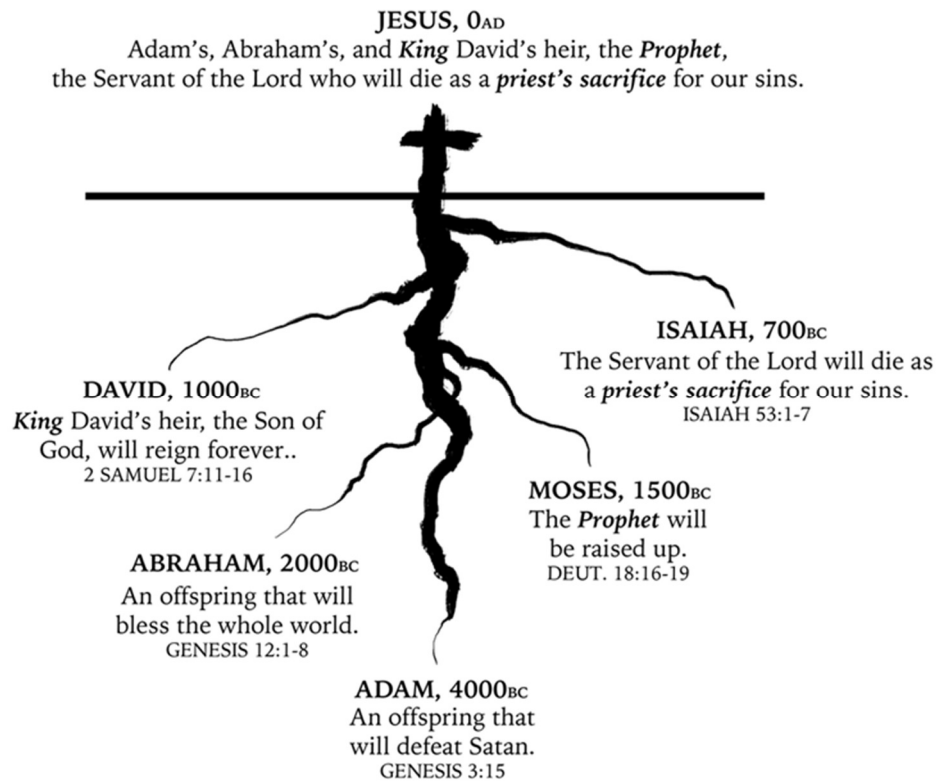
Take a few minutes to walk through the timeline of Old Testament History.



Discuss the **promises** of a Savior which God made to his people along the way. All these promises would eventually be fulfilled by the coming of Jesus Christ.

### Taking it Deeper

From the early chapters of Genesis through the end of the Old Testament, there is much we can learn about God. Reading the Old Testament is like looking for a golden thread that runs through the entire tapestry. That golden thread is the promise of the Christ.



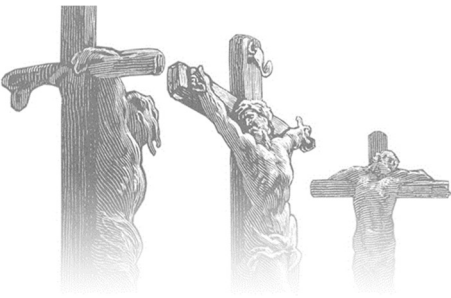
What do we learn about the value he places on people?

What do we learn about his promises?

What do we learn about the way he treats the nations and rulers of history?

### for next time...

Read the account of the worldwide flood (Genesis 6-9) and bring any questions to our class next week.



## 5. Promises Kept: The Life of Jesus

*The Roman centurion in charge of the execution watched the whole thing unfold. All along, one condemned man had seemed different from the others. He endured the taunts and mockery of the soldiers without flinching. He endured a flogging that was brutal enough to kill a man, and after that he carried his own cross with slow, determined footsteps towards the place they called Golgotha. Finally, he collapsed from exhaustion and had to be helped by a foreigner from the crowd.*

*When they reached the crucifixion site, the centurion continued to watch this condemned man exhibit unusual behavior. As the soldiers pounded the nails through his hands and feet, instead of the usual foul-mouthed curses he prayed “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” As abuse was hurled at him by the members of the crowd, instead of responding in kind he simply bowed his head and took it. The only words he spoke were a gentle promise to the criminal beside him, who was begging him for mercy.*

*But the strangest part of all was the end. Complete darkness came over the land, and a sense of mounting apprehension gripped the centurion and his men as it stayed pitch-black for three hours in the very middle of the day. At the end of that time, the condemned man cried out one more time in a loud voice to God, and then he bowed his head and died. At that precise moment a massive earthquake shook the ground so powerfully that the very rocks split in two.*

*The earthquake was the last straw. There could be no longer be any doubt about the true identity of the condemned prisoner, the one they called Jesus of Nazareth. Falling to his knees, the centurion exclaimed, “Surely this was the Son of God!”*

*The centurion was right. Somehow, the man on the cross before him was also true God. And yet the soldiers had just killed him. How is this possible? What can all of it mean?*

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***(adapted from Matthew 27:45—54)***

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Thousands of years’ worth of promises were kept, as God sent his Son, Jesus, into the world to be our Savior. Today’s lesson focuses on Jesus’ birth, life, and death on the cross, and his glorious resurrection from the grave on Easter.

### What is the basic story of Christ’s life?

Christ’s life, as recorded in the 4 Gospels, can be summarized in five major parts: his birth, the epiphany (revealing) of his public ministry, ministry, Holy Week, and resurrection appearances. We’ll take a brief look at each part of Jesus’ life, noting that at every stage God is fulfilling prophecies that he made in the Old Testament.

## 5-6 B.C. Christ's birth

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Christ's birth is riddled with the fulfillment of prophecy. Note the examples below, which are just a sampling of all those recorded in the Bible.

**An offspring of Adam:** Genesis 3:15 → Luke 3

**An offspring of Abraham:** Genesis 12:1-8 → Matthew 1

**The virgin birth:** Isaiah 7:14 → Matthew 1:22-23

**A birth in Bethlehem:** Micah 5:2 → Luke 2:4

## 26 AD. EPIPHANY of Public MINISTRY

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Jesus' baptism marked the beginning of his public life, identifying him as David's heir, the Son of God. Jesus' temptation in the wilderness demonstrates his ability to stand up to Satan:

**Baptism:** 2 Samuel 7:11-16 → Matthew 3:13-17

**Temptation in the Wilderness:** Matthew 4:1-11

## 26-30 AD. Jesus' public ministry

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Jesus' ministry was primarily a teaching and preaching of the good news of salvation from sins. Jesus also did many wonderful miracles. The miracles showed that Jesus was:

the fulfillment of the OT promise for a **Prophet**: Deut. 18:16-19 → John 5:39-47

a divine Savior, with all the power of God: Isaiah 35:4-6 → Matthew 9:1-7; 11:2-6

a compassionate Savior, sent to preach the good news of forgiveness: Isaiah 61:1,12 → Luke 4:14-21

## 30 AD. Holy Week

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During Holy Week, Jesus' mission on earth came to its climax. The majority of the gospels is dedicated to these eight days.

**Sunday:** Triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Matthew 21:1-11

**Monday:** Jesus cleanses the temple. Matthew 21:12-17

**Tuesday:** Jesus teaches openly. Matthew 21-26

**Wednesday:** Jesus rests.

**Thursday:** Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper. Matthew 26

**Friday:** Jesus is tried and crucified, our ultimate **Priest** and sacrifice. Isaiah 53:1-7 → Matthew 27

**Saturday:** Pilate sends guards to the tomb.

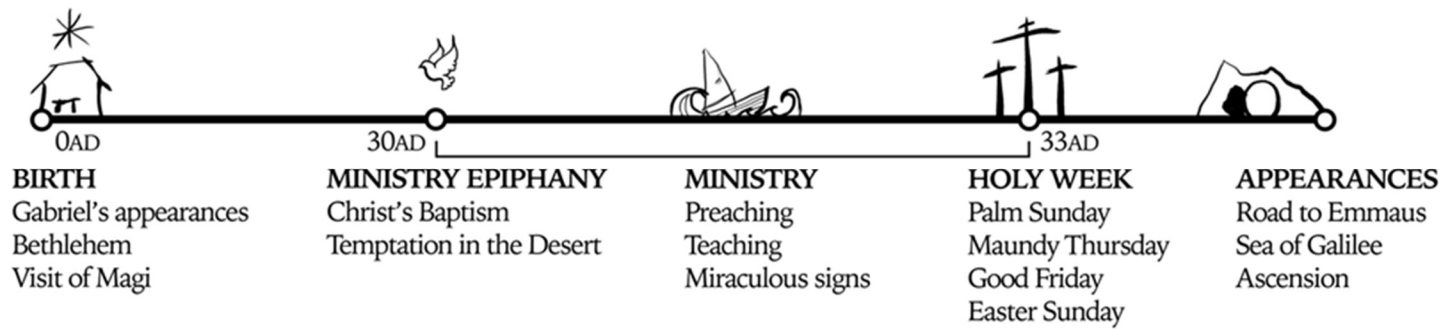
**Sunday:** Jesus rises from the dead. He proves that he is our **King** who will rule eternally. Matthew 28

## Resurrection Appearances

After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to many people, to confirm to the world that he was who he claimed to be: God come to earth as a man to save sinners from their sins. Major events include appearances to the women at the tomb, to Thomas and the disciples behind locked doors, and the ascension into heaven.

The Life of Jesus recorded in the Bible is meant to be the clear continuation of the Old Testament, as the promised Messiah finally comes to save the world. To see the close connection between the Old and New Testaments, compare Psalm 22 with excerpts from the gospels below.

<p><b>PSALM 22</b></p> <p><b>My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?</b> Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest...</p> <p>I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people. <b>All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads.</b> "He trusts in the Lord," they say, "let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him..."</p> <p>Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; <b>they pierce my hands and my feet.</b> All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. <b>They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.</b></p>	<p><b>Matthew 27:46</b> About three in the afternoon Jesus cried in a loud voice, "Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani?" (which means "<b>My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?</b>")</p> <p><b>Mark 15:29-31</b> Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!"</p> <p><b>John 19:22-24</b> When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. "<b>Let's not tear it,</b>" they said to one another. "<b>Let's decide by lot who will get it.</b>" This happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled that said, "They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment." So this is what the soldiers did.</p>
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## Taking it deeper...

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The life of Christ is tremendously important because of ***what it means for us***. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are not just facts of history – they have a real, vital connection to our life, and our eternal future.

This is God's truth: His Son came to earth to wash away your sins and guarantee you eternal life in heaven.

How does that truth affect each of the following areas of your life?

Home

Work

Church

Attitude

### More info: What books of the Bible record Jesus' life?

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God has preserved four records of the life and ministry of Jesus. Each of the four authors of these ***gospels*** (books that tell the *good news* of the life of Jesus) had his own specific background, perspective, and specific audience. If we keep this in mind as we read them, it will clear up any alleged discrepancies we might notice.

### Matthew: An Unexpected Jesus

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**Author:** Tax collector-turned-disciple

**Audience:** Jews

Presupposes knowledge of Jewish customs

Focuses heavily on Jesus' interaction with the Jewish leaders

Quotes the Old Testament **more than 60 times** to prove that Jesus is the promised Messiah the Jews were waiting for!

**Purpose:** Demonstrate that although Jesus was not exactly what the Jewish community was expecting, he was every bit the promised Messiah.

### Mark: Superhero Jesus

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**Author:** Jewish missionary, traveled extensively with Peter

**Audience:** Gentile Christians in Rome.

Explains Jewish practices and customs to an audience that was unfamiliar with them.

Shows Jesus as courageous and powerful, which was fitting for a Roman populace that valued courage and valor above all else. (Mark includes more miracles than any of the other gospel writers.)

Only 1 Old Testament quote

**Purpose:** Provide a gospel account for the Roman world, also share Peter's insights

## Luke: Global Jesus

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**Author:** Missionary and doctor

**Audience:** A Gentile friend named Theophilus

The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were meant to be one unified work, addressed to Gentiles. Considered together, Luke and Acts tell the story of the gospel's departure from Jerusalem (the center of the Jewish world) to Rome (the center of the Gentile world).

**Purpose:** Demonstrate that Jesus is a world issue. Luke does this by stressing the universality of the gospel, pointing out Jesus' care for the weak and marginalized, and showing that Jesus' life was a real historic event surrounded by other real historic events.

## John: My God and My Friend, Jesus

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**Author:** Fisherman-turned-disciple

**Audience:** Christians in a growing church (c. 90 A.D.) who are struggling with misunderstandings and false teachings about Jesus. One particularly dangerous false teaching at this time stated that Jesus was not true God, but only a man.

**Purpose:** Prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, and also show Jesus' love for his disciples and for all Christians, whom he calls his "friends" (John 15:14)

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**Homework: Choose one of the Gospels and read through it this month.**

Some suggestions:

1) Keep a notebook diary as you read, asking questions of the text,

What sins does this lead me to confess?

How does this show me Jesus actively obeying the law for me?

How does this show me Jesus paying the ransom price to set me free from sin?

How does this section bring me comfort or strengthen me?

How does this section encourage me to Godly living for Jesus?

What is something new I learned today?

2) If you read one chapter a day, you'll get through the book in a month. If you read through two chapters a day, you can read through the book twice in one month.

3) Suggested Bibles: a) Concordia Self-Study Bible; b) The Lutheran Study Bible; c) Today's Light Bible (ed. Jane Fryer); d) The Daily Bible—in chronological order (F. LaGard Smith)