Bible Basics (Pt. 1)

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Preacher: Joey Snodgrass

[0:00] Amen. It is good to sing praises to the Lord and to gather together to study His Word.! So I'm delighted to do that tonight. Just one final reminder, I know at the beginning of school year it can be tough to get back into the rhythm of sitting and listening to people talk for a while. So just a reminder, please keep your phones away. Please do your best to be distraction-free to those around you.

And the reason you need to listen well and not be a distraction to people around you is not because who I am or that anything I come up with or have to say is unique or worth your attention. But if I do my job well, if I'm faithful, what I'm saying to you is what God has already said to all of us. And so you need to pay attention to what God has said through His Word and is saying through His Word to you tonight. And so you'll be accountable to God for how you listen, not because of who I am, but because of who the Lord is. And so you don't want to be accountable to Him for being a distraction to someone else, preventing them from hearing His Word. And I will say that I think print Bibles are better than digital Bibles. I don't think they're automatically more holy, but your print Bibles don't get notifications. And so they're less likely to distract you. And so if you don't have a hard copy Bible, we can get you one. We can let you borrow it for tonight or just give it to you if you don't have one at home. But we would prefer you to use those for Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings as well.
Well, as I mentioned, we're going to be doing a series just for two weeks called
Bible Basics. After this, we'll go into the book of James for the rest of the semester. But we're going to be looking at the basics of the Bible. So tonight we're going to be looking at how the Bible is put together. And then next week we'll look at how to read the Bible. Super practical next week. Tonight I want to give a broad overview of the whole flow of Scripture, how the Scripture fits together, that it's telling one cohesive, unified story. But before we get there, we need to ask a more basic question. Why the Bible? Why do we study the Bible at our church? Why is there so much preaching of the Bible at our church? Why do we encourage you to read the Bible on your own? Why is everything we do revolving around the Bible, even including the songs that we sing? Well, there's a couple reasons for that. One, as I've already mentioned, the Bible is God's Word.
The Bible is God's Word. And you can write down 2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17. Many of you probably have it memorized. It says, all Scripture is breathed out by God. Every word of your Bible is from God for you.
[2:53] It's from God to you. And so God doesn't just speak in the past. God is still speaking through the Word that's been written, through the Word that's been revealed. The Bible is God's Word. It's how we understand what He has said. And the second reason, first is the Bible is God's Word. Second, it's because the Bible sanctifies us. The Bible sanctifies us. It equips us. It makes us more like Jesus. This is what Jesus Himself prayed in John 17, 17, if you want to write down that reference.

He was praying on the night of His arrest. He said, Father, sanctify them, talking about His people, sanctify them in the truth. Your Word is truth. So the Bible is God's Word to us. The Bible is also what sanctifies us, what makes us more like Jesus. And so that's why our church revolves around the Bible. Your goal as a Christian should be to become as much like Jesus as possible in this life. And the way you do that is through studying God's Word. The way you do that is by knowing God through His Word. God has revealed Himself so that we can know Him, and knowing Him is true life.
Here's a quote from a guy from church history. His name was Ambrose. And he said this about the Bible. He said, as in paradise. So talking about the Garden of Eden. Just like in paradise, God walks in the Holy Scriptures seeking man. And so Scripture is not just a book for us to analyze. Scripture is not just a book for us to control or to master. It's a book that has control over us. It's a

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book that searches your heart. It's a book that grips your life and changes your life.
But why do we need to take a big picture look at it? Why do we need to zoom out and look at how it's put together, look at all of its parts? You know, we've got Bibles everywhere. You've probably got multiple Bibles at your house. Some of them probably have your name on them or in them. You probably have multiple copies of the Bible. But the reason we always need to study the Bible, the reason it's helpful to study it in a big picture way is because in America in particular, the Bible is often purchased but rarely read. Most people, even non-Christians, have multiple Bibles, none of which they've actually read all the way through. And so the Bible is something we're acquainted with, we're familiar with it, but it's something that we can very often neglect to actually pick up and read. And so we need to have a broad sweeping understanding of the main theme, the main truth that it's teaching.
[5:48] Because the better we know the Bible, the better we will know God. And the better you know God, the better you'll live. And the better you live, the better friend and neighbor and church member you'll be. So we can't cover everything tonight, but I hope by God's grace that you'll be helped to see and feel the broad sweep of Scripture as it presents its main theme, Jesus Christ. All of Scripture points to or is about Christ. But we don't just want to know the Bible for the sake of knowing the Bible, we want to know and love the God of the Bible. The Bible isn't just an end in itself, it's not just a text for us to analyze and master, because it's possible to know the Bible and not love Jesus.

We want to love Jesus, but to do that we need to know the whole Bible. And so bird's eye views can be helpful of Scripture or whatever you're studying. It's a helpful way to read books or watch movies, zoom out and think about the big picture. Has anyone been to the top of the Devon Tower, just like on a tour?
Yeah, it's an incredible thing. I would encourage you to do it. From up there, you can pretty much see all of Oklahoma City. And if you're driving, if you drive on I-40 a lot, you know the route, you know how the road weaves, you know how it kind of bends around certain geographical features. But when you're up there, you kind of get a big picture view of our city. You get a big picture view of how all the interstates connect and how everything fits together. Or if you've flown in a plane, you understand how seeing the bigger picture, you can see how things fit together. Or anyone like time-lapse videos?
Okay, okay, there we go. I thought it was just me. So you can see a time-lapse video, it portrays something that is naturally very slow, like a flower opening up. But when it's sped up, you can see it happen very quickly. And it's helpful to get a quick sweep through so that you can see things take place very quickly. And we're going to do both of those things with the Bible tonight. We're going to give you a bird's-eye view of the whole story, how it fits together, and kind of a time-lapse of how the story progresses. And this isn't just a helpful way to study the Bible. This way of studying the Bible is actually a privilege that we have. It's actually a privilege that we have. Why?
Because the characters who are in the Bible didn't have this advantage. Abraham wasn't able to kind of step outside of himself and see the broad sweep of where God was going with all of his promises. He just had to live a day at a time. The disciples in Jesus' day were confused by some of the things he said. They were saddened when he died. They couldn't see the bigger picture. But we, possessing the whole Bible, can know its storyline and see where it's going. The Bible is a book of books. It's got 66 books written by about 40 different authors over about 1,500 years. And yet its story is unified because the primary author of the Bible is God himself. There is one divine author. And so we'll look at the Bible in two different parts tonight. We'll divide it into the Old Testament and the New Testament just like it is in the Bibles that you have. We're going to label the Old Testament as promises made and the New Testament as promises kept. There's a guy named Mark Dever that's outlined it that way. I think it's really helpful. Promises made and promises kept. And it's a little bit over simplified because there are promises that God makes in the Old Testament that he also keeps in the Old Testament.
[9:42] But in terms of the big storyline of the Bible, he makes promises in the Old Testament. He keeps those promises in the New Testament. God always keeps his promises. God is not a politician. He does not just say things to get your approval. He does not just say things to get you to like him. He means what he says. Also, political ads, the smear campaigns are kind of funny. It's like, Kevin Stitt hates grandmas.

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Don't vote for him. Just, it's weird character assassination. Someone said we should do that for like churches. Like churches make smear campaigns about each other. It's like First Baptist Mustang. Their pastor celebrates Christmas in July. And then everyone would hate us. That's not relevant. But anyway, thanks Luke. Off to a good start here. So God always keeps his promises. And Christ is the fulfillment of all of God's promises. So first, let's look at promises made. Promises made. And in parentheses, you can put Old Testament. And I don't know what your impression of the Old Testament is.

You might think, man, that's way too long, way too detailed. If we could get like a summarized or condensed version of it, it would be more helpful. As I mentioned, this is where God makes all his promises. And so the better we understand the Old Testament, the better we'll be able to appreciate the New Testament. If you ignore the Old Testament, the New Testament, you won't be able to understand it as well as you should. And so everything we believe about Christ has its foundation in the Old Testament has its foundation in the Old Testament.

Everything we believe about his person and work, who he is and what he does, is founded on what the Old Testament teaches us. And so the better you understand the whole flow of the story of the Bible, the better you'll be able to understand its individual parts. Okay? How many of you have read the Lord of the Rings series? Okay, nerd alert. No, I'm just kidding. You guys are smarter than us. We'll all work for you someday. Proud of you. I've seen the movies. Haven't read any of the books because I'm not smart. But anyway, if you were to just open up a random book of the Lord of the Rings series and read a random paragraph, unless you had read the whole series, you would not be able to explain what that paragraph means. You wouldn't be able to tell us what's set up to lead to that paragraph and what's going to come after it. And so the same thing is true with the Bible. The better we understand the flow of the whole story, the better we'll be able to understand its individual parts. The Bible is telling a unified story.

[12:26] The Bible is giving us our story. And so when we think about the Old Testament, we can break it up into three different sections. Okay? So we can group it in 17 books, five books, and 17 more books. So 17, 5, 17. This is how it's outlined in our English Bibles. The Jews thought of the Old Testament in terms of the law, the prophets, and the writings. Our books are arranged a little bit differently. So we'll go 17, 5, and 17. And so the first 17 is Genesis through Esther. We'll go through these again here momentarily. Then Job through the Song of Solomon is the five section. And Isaiah through Malachi is the final section. So under the Old Testament, we're going to look at a few different things. Number one, we see a perfect law and a particular history. A perfect law and a particular history is number one. This is Genesis through Esther. You can open with me in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 1, verse 1. The first five books of the Bible are referred to as the law, or you could hear it referred to as the Pentateuch, or the Torah. These are all referring to the first five books of the

Bible. All of these books were written by Moses. I met a Moses earlier. Where's Moses? Right there, front row. Where Moses should be, am I right? All right, so not that Moses, a different Moses. But anyway, he wrote the first five books of the Bible. And I want to begin with Genesis 1, 1. First sentence of the Bible, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. This is the most impressive miracle that the Bible records for us. In the very first sentence on the very first page, God created everything from nothing. And what Genesis 1 details is he goes through the first six days of the universe, and God creating everything. He forms things and then he fills them. He forms the sky and fills the sky.

He forms the land and then fills the land. God did all of this in a week. And the pinnacle, or the most important part of that creation, is man and woman. We see this at the end of chapter 1. He creates male and female. He creates them in his image. And he creates them as a married couple. You can flip over to chapter 2. He forms the woman and presents her to man. He walks her down the aisle. And the two of them live together in harmony and enjoy together. And so here's a couple of lines I want you to think about. You can write them down or just think about them. We'll come back to them at the end.

But what we see from Genesis 1 and 2 is that God creates his people to be in his place under his rule.

He creates his people, Adam and Eve, to be in his place, the Garden of Eden, under his rule, doing what he says. And then another line is that the Bible begins with a marriage in a garden in the presence of God.

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[16:08] We begin here with a marriage of Adam and Eve in the garden in the presence of God. And they live in joy and harmony, but it doesn't last long because in chapter 3, the serpent comes along and tempts them to do the one thing that God told them not to do. He told them not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And that's exactly what Satan, the serpent, tempts them to do. And when they sin, there are consequences. The Lord says, when you eat of it in that day, you will surely die. And God sends them out of his presence. He has mercy on them in that they don't die that very moment, but he does sentence them to spiritual and ultimately physical death by sending them out of the garden. And with this chapter, sin enters the world and death enters the world through sin.

In Genesis 3, there is something powerful enough in this chapter to explain why our world is the way that it is. Why your family is the way that it is. Why your school is the way that it is. Why your life is the way that it is. It's because of sin. Sin has marked and stained everything. Even good things in life are still marked and stained by sin. Why is that? Genesis chapter 3 is the only piece of literature in the entire world that can explain that. That can explain why our world is the way that it is.

But even in this chaos, even in the nuclear bomb that goes off in this perfect world up to this point, God makes a promise. Look with me at chapter 3 verse 15. The Lord is cursing this serpent who's tempted them and brought temptation into the world. And he says, I will put enmity. So I'll make you guys enemies between you and the woman and between your seed or your offspring and her seed. He, that is the seed of the woman, shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. And so whatever's going to happen, we don't know a lot of details about this promise yet. The woman at some point is going to have a male child. And this male child is going to destroy the serpent. But in that act of destruction, the male child of this woman will receive an injury, will receive a wound. And as the

Bible goes on, God is going to expand on this promise. He's going to fill in the details. He's going to color in the lines of this promise through something called covenants. And covenants are promises made by God. Covenant, when you read that language in the Bible, it is relational language. God made covenants with Adam, with Noah, with Abraham, with Moses, with David, and makes a new covenant that we'll look at later. But covenant is relationship kind of language. If you've gone to a wedding, that is a covenant that you are witnessing. It has some legal ramifications, some legal implications, but it is fundamentally about the relationship of that couple. That's what God's covenants are like. There are some rules, there are some things to live by, but it's fundamentally about the relationship. And the thing that breaks this covenant is sin. Sin breaks covenants. Sin separates us from God. And so if we would live with God, if we would live in God's presence, we need to be reconciled to him. We need to be made right with him. Something has to be done to deal with our sin. And the Lord taught this from very early on in the storyline of the Bible through something that's called sacrifices. The Lord commanded that his people would make sacrifices to him to pay for their sins. Now sacrifices aren't unique to Israel. Pretty much every people group that's ever existed, especially in the ancient world, had some concept of killing something in order to appease a God that they're worshiping. Killing an animal, killing a child, killing something to appease a God that they were worshiping. And so sacrifices themselves aren't unique to Israel. But there are a few things about the sacrifices that Israel makes that are unique. So what's unique about those sacrifices? There are three things. Number one,

Israel's sacrifices take place in the context of a relationship. They know the God that they're worshiping. They know who he is. He's spoken to them. He's revealed himself to them. And so it's in the context of a real relationship. The number two thing is that these sacrifices aren't done out of ignorance or desperation. So if you read some pagan cultures, they'll, you know, there's an earthquake in town.

[21:28] And so they're like, okay, the gods are displeased. So we need to do something to try to make them happy. We need to throw someone into a volcano or, you know, do something to make them less angry with us.

They don't know what to do. They're taking guesses. They're trying to figure it out. Maybe this will do the trick. Maybe this is the solution. But Israel's sacrifices were done according to what God said.

God is the one who initiated it. It wasn't people's idea. If you've seen Madagascar 2, Escape to Africa, It's a good movie. But in that movie, Melman is going to offer himself up to the gods by

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throwing himself into a volcano.
And it's kind of funny, but that's actually an accurate description of ancient cultures. There's a drought. You know, there's no more water where they live. And so they're trying to do something to get water to come back.
And Melman volunteers his tribute. But that's an accurate picture. These sacrifices were done out of ignorance. They were done out of desperation to try to appease the gods.
[22:34] The third thing that makes these unique is that they were done to cover specific sins. Israel's sacrifices were done to cover specific sins. The person offering the sacrifice knew what they had done that was wrong.

They knew what sins they had committed because God spelled out what sin was. And they recognized that the wages of sin is death. I sinned and I must die unless something dies in my place.
The wages of sin is death. And so the sacrifices were fundamental to teach Israel what sin was and what God demanded and how holy he was.
But they recognized very early on these aren't working. They have to do them over and over and over again every single year, year after year. They weren't working and they actually knew that. They recognized these sacrifices are just pointing to something more permanent. Pointing to a more permanent solution that needs to get here to get rid of our sin.
[23:43] Now turn with me to Exodus chapter 34. One more book to your right. Exodus 34 and you guessed it verses 6 and 7.

And in Exodus 34 we're introduced to a riddle that the Old Testament ultimately doesn't solve for us. We're introduced to something that is challenging something that doesn't quite make sense until the New Testament comes.
Look at verse 6. The Lord or Yahweh passed before him that's Moses and proclaimed Yahweh, Yahweh a God merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.
Keeping steadfast love for thousands. Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. God is going to forgive sinners. That's good news but look at what he says next.
But Yahweh will by no means clear the guilty. Visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.
[25:08] how is it that God can promise to forgive sin and say he's going to punish everyone who's guilty? In order to if you have sin that needs to be forgiven you are guilty.

And so God promises he says I will forgive sin and I'm going to punish every single person who's guilty. And Israel would not have been able to figure all of this out. They would have just had to confess that both of these things were true.
We know God's just he'll punish the guilty we know he's merciful he will have mercy on some. But this riddle goes unsolved throughout the rest of the Old Testament.
So what was Israel's hope? What hope did they have? Well their hope wasn't in themselves they were too sinful for that they recognized that they were reminded of that. Their hope wasn't in their history who their parents were or their grandparents because all of them were sinful too and they had been told those stories.
Their hope wasn't in their sacrifices because those didn't seem to be working permanently. Their hope was in a person. Their hope was in who they called the Messiah or who we call the Christ and he's predicted all throughout the Old Testament.
[26:23] Go with me to Deuteronomy chapter 18 fifth book of the Bible it's after Numbers. these are some of Moses' final words to Israel before he passed on and he says in Deuteronomy 18 15 Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you from your brothers it is to him you shall listen.

And so Moses is saying God sent me as a prophet there's someone coming down the line that is going to be raised up like me listen to him pay attention to him and Jesus the first miracle that he does is turning water into wine at a wedding and Mary his mother at that event says listen to him do what he tells you it's an introduction to Jesus as the prophet who is to come and starting with Joshua going through Esther we get the history of Israel all the way from the time of Moses until about 400 years before Jesus and we're introduced to kings and warriors and conquerors and priests some of them good some of them really bad some of them we're not really sure if they're

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good or bad we just can't figure them out because they're complex people but we recognize that if a king is coming if a priest is coming if a prophet is coming it's someone better than these guys it's someone more perfect than David someone wiser than Solomon someone more holy and powerful even than Joshua the second part of the Old Testament so that was a perfect law in a particular history the second part is a poetic anticipation a poetic anticipation this is Job through the song of Solomon this is the poetry of the Old Testament this is these are the songs of the Old Testament this is wisdom literature like Proverbs and Christ is very clearly predicted we don't have time to go there but if you want to write down
Psalm 16 and Psalm 110 those things very clearly predict Christ reigning over all the earth and even rising from the dead and the last major section of the Old Testament is a prophetic failure this is Isaiah through Malachi a prophetic failure Isaiah through Malachi is a group of 17 books all of them are prophets and they are very clearly predicting that Christ would come Isaiah 53 is an example of that that he was stricken and smitten he was crushed for our iniquities upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed it's Isaiah 53 3 and 4 and go with me to just one place here the book of Jeremiah if you can find Psalms keep going to the right to Isaiah Jeremiah is one more book after Isaiah
Jeremiah 31 the Old Testament really kind of ends by pointing to another covenant that hasn't been made yet it points to a new covenant and so Jeremiah 31 starting in verse 31 the Lord says behold the days are coming declares Yahweh when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt my covenant that they broke though I was their husband declares Yahweh for this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days declares Yahweh I will put my law within them and I will write it on their hearts and I will be their
God and they shall be my people and no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother saying no Yahweh for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest declares Yahweh for I will forgive and the prophets continually call out Israel's sin they point us forward to this new covenant but reinforce the fact that Israel is sinful and has failed to keep their end of the covenant and so we kind of limp to the end of the Old Testament Israel is continually sinful continually rebellious and we ask is this all there is to the story like God made grand promises back in Genesis 315 is this all that there is to the story but God wasn't done yet because enter the New Testament and so we see our second main point is promises kept promises made was the Old Testament promises kept is the
[31:50] New Testament and we can often take the New Testament for granted we read about Jesus in the New Testament we read letters written by Paul and Peter in the New Testament we're more familiar with it than some of the strange stories of the Old Testament but if we're not careful that familiarity can lead to disinterest or not caring about what the New Testament teaches as we enter the New Testament we're entering into the New Covenant which is the climax of the story that began in the Garden and here in the New Testament we meet in flesh and blood the promised prophet priest and king we're introduced to Jesus Christ himself go with me to Matthew chapter one the New

Testament introduces us to Christ but what is the New Testament's focus what is it continually returned to what is it focused on time and time again its focus is on Christ its focus is on Jesus of Nazareth he's the center of it all he's the heart of everything in the gospels Matthew through John he's described to us in the letters he is explained and applied and in Revelation the final book we'll look at tonight Christ is eternally exalted but in the New Testament Jesus is everything and so for our study of the New Testament we want to focus on him and so I want to ask four questions about him and let the New Testament give us its answers about who Christ is so question number one who will Christ be who will he be the
Bible began with a beginning in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and the New Testament also begins with another beginning if you look with me at Matthew chapter 1 verse 1 says the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David the son of Abraham that word genealogy if we translated it literally from what Matthew wrote it would say the book of the genesis of Jesus Christ son of David son of Abraham we're introduced to the beginning of Jesus family tree and it's a family tree that's a lot like yours probably there's stories that are sad there's stories that are dark there's stories that are sinful there's stories that are twisted demented Jesus was born into

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a real human family Jesus was born into a family that was marked and stained by sin just like all of our families are but if you look at verse 18
Jesus' birth took place in a unique way and Matthew tells us about it says that his birth took place that when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph before they came together so before they were actually married and had consummated their relationship she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit Jesus was born of a virgin Mary had not been married Mary had not been with a man and she had a baby inside of her and his name was Jesus and this is really the fulfillment of a pattern because all throughout the Old Testament if you're paying attention there are a ton of miraculous births there are a ton of unlikely births women who are barren and can't have kids suddenly giving birth to a male child who carries God's story along and here's the unlikeliest birth of all the Virgin Mary gives birth to a son and if you remember back to Genesis 3 15 how is it that Jesus was described he was described as the seed of the woman it's a really odd description it's a unique description and yet it makes perfect sense with how
Jesus came into the world he was born of the woman and in verse 23 this happened to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel which means God with us Jesus isn't just another king he's not just another deliverer he is God in the flesh and the gospels introduce us to him we have four biographies or four pictures of this one Jesus Matthew is written to a Jewish audience and so he constantly quotes the Old Testament constantly shows how Jesus fulfills prophecy Mark was a disciple of Peter and writes down his recollections of his time with Christ Luke is the gospel for the outcast or the gospel for the loser people who are on the outside of society people who are rejected by their people people who are sick and looked down upon
[37:25] Jesus draws near to them to seek them and to save them men like Zacchaeus or sick people who aren't allowed into the city itself and finally John gives a unique focus of Jesus deity that he is God in the flesh so that's who Christ will be second question is what will Christ do what will Christ do what we learn from the New Testament is that he came to die that's what he would do but his death would accomplish something his death would actually accomplish both God's judgment and God's forgiveness Jesus is the answer to the Old Testament's riddle how can God forgive sin and punish sinners Jesus died to forgive sinners and take their punishment on himself he is the true substitute he is the true lamb of

God who takes away the sin of the world and so when John sees him John the Baptist sees him for the first time he says behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world it's through this dying lamb that sin was actually put away forever sin was actually atoned for and it's his death on this tree that allows that cross to be a tree of life for us who believe in him to enter into eternal life and everything in the New Testament flows out of Jesus' death and resurrection the gospels present him as dying and rising again and the rest of the New Testament unpacks what that means for us so third question is who will Christ's people be who will his people be well it starts to pick up steam in Acts and in the letters we recognize that his people won't just be
Jewish his people will be Gentile as well as Jewish and they won't stay separate they'll actually be integrated together into the same churches and that led to all kinds of issues all kinds of divisions among them and so you read places and sometimes entire books are devoted to how people from different cultural backgrounds can be together worshiping the same Christ in the same church and so Christ's people will be a mixture of Jews and Gentiles a people from all kinds of walks of life and former sins that they were identified by and Christ will bring them together into his temple the church so go with me last book we'll go to tonight go with me to the book of Revelation the last book of the Bible Revelation chapter 7 in Revelation 7 starting in verse 4 there are at the end of time 144,000
Israelites who are saved they're converted to Christ you see there are 12,000 from each tribe of Israel starting in verse 5 through the end of the chapter and so John the apostle John who wrote the gospel of John 1st 2nd 3rd John also writes Revelation and he sees he hears about these Jews being converted these Jews being saved but when he turns and looks at heaven verse 9 says after this I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number so this is more than 144,000 from every nation from all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and before the Lamb clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb God this is what our future as Christians looks like the Christians from 1st

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Baptist Mustang will be included in that number will be included in that great multitude that no one can number from every tribe and language and people group the Lamb will gather his people that's who his people will be last question is what will Christ's kingdom be like what will his kingdom be like go with me to Revelation chapter 21 John sees a new heavens and a new earth and he sees in verse 2 he says 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 the new heavens and the new earth will be a lot like the garden of Eden but so much better it's a new garden with no sin a new garden with no temptation no serpent will enter into it to bring temptation and if you look at chapter 22 verse 1 then the angel showed me the river of the water of life bright as crystal flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city also on either side of the river the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit yielding its fruit each month the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations no longer will there be anything accursed but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it and his servants will worship him they will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads and night will be no more they will need no light of lamp or sun for the Lord God will be their light and they will reign forever and ever this is a new Eden that the Lord creates for us in his presence if you're a Christian this is your future we will be

[44:35] God's people in God's place under God's rule and just as the Bible began with a marriage in a garden in the presence of God so it ends with a marriage in a garden in the presence of God every promise that God has made will be kept every promise that God has made will be fulfilled by Christ and in Christ so as we think about our future in heaven here I love what C.S. Lewis wrote he wrote the Chronicles of Narnia series which I still love because I'm a kid at heart I don't look like it but I'm a child and he wrote that series of books for his niece she was about seven when he started writing writing those books and by the time he finished she would have been the age of some of you guys late teenager going off into college and he concludes the whole series with a little personal note to her he says for us this is the end of all the stories but for them meaning the characters it was only the beginning of the real story which goes on forever in which every chapter is better than the one before such a beautiful conclusion in some sense death is the end of the story for us in some sense the passing away of this world is the end of the story for us but really that's just the beginning of the true story of our lives that's just the opening chapter of the real story that God is telling through our lives

God is preparing a place for us God is preparing us for life in his presence and if you're a believer this is your future because of God's grace if you're an unbeliever this is not your future yet but I would encourage you to turn from your sin and call out to Christ and this will be your eternity peace in the presence of God among his people this is where we're heading but until we get there God has given us his word God has given us the Bible he's given us his promises and he calls us to trust him as we trust him and follow him Christ's righteousness is given to us this is the gospel we believe this is the gospel that the Bible is all about and so let's praise God for allowing us to have these promises but let's praise him not just for the ability to know these promises but the ability to read these promises over and over and over again we need to be good readers so that we can read the Bible well so that we can be good worshipers

God has given us a book let's read it well pray with me our father we thank you so much for the Bible that you've given to us it's a lamp to our feet it's a light to our path it reveals our sin it reveals your glory it reveals your holiness it shows us what you demand of us but most importantly it shows us Christ he's the solution to the riddle of the Old Testament that you can be just you can judge every sin and you can forgive sinners father I pray that we would look to Christ we would follow him at the beginning of this new school year that we would look to him for all of our satisfaction and all of our peace we would not look to this world but we would look to your word and I pray for these students as many of them have already started school some of them are starting tomorrow or in the coming week I pray that you would give them wisdom to be a light in their schools that they would point people to Christ that they would live for him that you'd help give them wisdom to learn how to walk wisely help them to walk well in this coming school year and we're thankful for all that you have planned for us through Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights and we pray that we would

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just be happy and be glad in all the good things you've given us in this life it's in Christ's name we pray amen for all that you are as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as

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