

STUDY GUIDE

THE WHOLE STORY
OF THE BIBLE IN

16
VERSES

CHRIS BRUNO

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Study Guide for *The Whole Story of the Bible in 16 Verses*

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The Time Has Come

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PART 1

THE TIME IS COMING

Creation

MEMORY VERSE

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. (Genesis 1:31)

KEY BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Creation, Kingdom

THE STORY SO FAR

God created a kingdom, and he is the King.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1) "Our view of the world begins with our view of God" (p. 17).¹ How do you tend to see God? What two or three words would you use to describe him?

2) Does your view of God differ from the description in chapter 1 of *The Whole Story*? If so, why do you think this is the case? What outside influences affect your view of God?

¹Page numbers in parentheses are to Chris Bruno, *The Whole Story of the Bible in 16 Verses* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015).

3) Do you tend to think of God's creation as "very good"? Why or why not?

4) Why do some people (both Christians and non-Christians) tend to think of spiritual as good and physical as bad? What are some possible implications of this type of thinking on our priorities and behavior?

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 104

How does this psalm help you to understand the biblical-theological themes from chapter 1 and the big story of the Bible, which culminates with Jesus?

Genesis 1:1–2:3

What are some key insights from this passage that add to your understanding of the story and the biblical theological themes?

Human Beings

MEMORY VERSE

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Genesis 1:27-28)

KEY BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Creation, Kingdom, Covenant

THE STORY SO FAR

God created a kingdom, and he is the King, but he made human beings to represent him in that kingdom.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1) "John Calvin wrote that almost all of our wisdom consists of knowledge of God and knowledge of self" (p. 23). Does this ring true in your experience and, more importantly, in your reading of Scripture? Why or why not?

2) How is the emphasis on both men and women being made in God's image different from other, competing views of women in the ancient world? How should this idea help us understand gender roles now and then?

3) How has the image of God been misunderstood and misapplied in the modern world? In what ways have you failed to properly represent God to the world around you?

4) What might it look like for us to “have dominion over” the earth today?

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 8

How does this psalm help you understand the biblical theological themes from this chapter and the big story of the Bible, which culminates with Jesus?

Genesis 2:4–25

What are some key insights from this passage that add to your understanding of the story and the biblical theological themes?

The Fall

MEMORY VERSE

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 fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. (Genesis 3:6-7)

KEY BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Fall, Sin, Judgment

THE STORY SO FAR

God created a kingdom, and he is the King, but he made human beings to represent him in that kingdom. Adam and Eve rejected this call.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1) What do you think the root sin behind Adam and Eve's failure was? Have you seen that same sin in your own heart?

2) Do you ever think of God's commands as joy killers? Where do you think this perception comes from: your experience or the Bible?

The Fall

3) Do you think that the curse, which ultimately is death, was an overly harsh penalty for the sin of Adam and Eve? Why do you think God couldn't just let them off the hook?

4) The last paragraph of chapter 3 says, "But even in the midst of this darkness, we find notes of hope. God did not leave Adam and Eve naked (Gen. 3:21). He provided them with clothes, and in so doing, he gave them a picture of the redemption he would provide for them" (p. 33). Why do you think it was important for God to clothe them? What does that picture teach us about God?

BIBLE READINGS

Psalms 51

How does this psalm help you understand the biblical theological themes from this chapter and the big story of the Bible, which culminates with Jesus?

Genesis 3:1-13

What are some key insights from this passage that add to your understanding of the story and the biblical theological themes?

Redemption Promised

MEMORY VERSE

I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed;
he shall bruise you on the head,
and you shall bruise him on the heel. (Genesis 3:15, NASB)

KEY BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Redemption, Seed of the woman

THE STORY SO FAR

God created a kingdom, and he is the King, but he made human beings to represent him in that kingdom. Adam and Eve rejected this call, which led to sin and death. But God promised to defeat the Serpent through the seed of the woman.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1) Where have you seen God's smiling face behind what once looked like a frowning providence in your own life or the lives of those around you?

2) "The consequences of sin would be serious—pain in childbirth, relational conflict, toil in work, expulsion from the garden, and, most terrible, death and separation from God. But God would not let sin have the last word" (p. 36). Where have you seen the consequences of sin in your own life? In the midst of that pain, were you tempted to let sin have the last word?

3) What does the conflict between the offspring of the woman and the Serpent teach us about how to read the rest of the Bible?

4) God has promised to crush the head of the Serpent. Does that promise make our sin and pain right now irrelevant or immaterial? Why or why not? How should we view our sin in light of that promise?

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 91

How does this psalm help you understand the biblical theological themes from this chapter and the big story of the Bible, which culminates with Jesus?

Genesis 3:14–4:26

What are some key insights from this passage that add to your understanding of the story and the biblical theological themes?

Abraham

MEMORY VERSE

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. (Genesis 12:2-3)

KEY BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Seed of Abraham, Covenant, Land

THE STORY SO FAR

God created a kingdom, and he is the King, but he made human beings to represent him in that kingdom. Adam and Eve rejected this call, which led to sin and death. But God promised to defeat the Serpent through the seed of the woman, who is also the seed of Abraham. Through Abraham's family, the covenant blessings would come to the world.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1) Joshua 24:2 tells us that Abraham was an idol worshiper when God called him. What does that teach us about God's grace?

2) According to chapter 5, God's very presence is the greatest blessing he gives to his people. In other words, God's greatest gift is God himself. Do you tend to think of God's blessing in those terms? Why or why not?

Abraham

3) As Abraham and Sarah were approaching one hundred years of age, they were still waiting for God's promises to be fulfilled. What lessons can we learn about the nature of faith in God's promises from the story of Abraham and Sarah?

4) What does the covenant ceremony in Genesis 15 teach us about God's commitment to his saving promises?

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 105

How does this psalm help you understand the biblical theological themes from this chapter and the big story of the Bible, which culminates with Jesus?

Genesis 15

What are some key insights from this passage that add to your understanding of the story and the biblical theological themes?

Judah the King

MEMORY VERSE

The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. (Genesis 49:10)

KEY BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Kingdom, Seed (of Judah)

THE STORY SO FAR

God created a kingdom, and he is the King, but he made human beings to represent him in that kingdom. Adam and Eve rejected this call, which led to sin and death. But God promised to defeat the Serpent through the seed of the woman, who is also the seed of Abraham. Through Abraham's family, and specifically Judah's royal seed, the covenant blessings would come to the world.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1) We sometimes think of the Old Testament patriarchs as perfect models of virtue and moral rectitude. In what ways should the second half of Genesis change our perspective on this way of thinking?

2) How does the sin and failure of Abraham's family affect God's faithfulness to his covenant promises? What does that teach us about God's saving promises?

Judah the King

3) What do the promises to Judah add to our understanding of how God would fulfill his covenant promises to Abraham?

4) Can you see any connections between Adam and Eve's commission in the garden of Eden and God's promises to Judah? How does this help us see the big picture of the Bible more clearly?

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 2

How does this psalm help you understand the biblical theological themes from this chapter and the big story of the Bible, which culminates with Jesus?

Genesis 38

What are some key insights from this passage that add to your understanding of the story and the biblical theological themes?

The Passover Lamb

MEMORY VERSE

For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. (Exodus 12:23)

KEY BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Redemption, Substitution

THE STORY SO FAR

God created a kingdom, and he is the King, but he made human beings to represent him in that kingdom. Adam and Eve rejected this call, which led to sin and death. But God promised to defeat the Serpent through the seed of the woman, who is also the seed of Abraham. Through Abraham's family, and specifically Judah's royal seed, the covenant blessings would come to the world. Because all people were guilty and deserved death, the sacrifices of the Mosaic law revealed more clearly their need for a substitute.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1) Have you ever been confused or bothered by the Old Testament law and by the sacrifices in particular? Why do you think these things confused or bothered you?

2) In what ways do you understand the Old Testament law better after reading this chapter? What questions do you still have?

The Passover Lamb

3) Notice the order of events in the exodus account. First, God keeps his promises and delivers his people. Then he gives them the law. Do you see this pattern anywhere else in Scripture? What might this teach us about how we should respond to commands in the Bible?

4) Both the Egyptians and the Israelites needed a substitute. Do you honestly see yourself as someone who needs a substitute, or do you tend to think of yourself as someone who just needs a little extra help to be okay? Why do you think that is the case?

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 78

How does this psalm help you understand the biblical theological themes from this chapter and the big story of the Bible, which culminates with Jesus?

Exodus 12

What are some key insights from this passage that add to your understanding of the story and the biblical theological themes?

King David

MEMORY VERSE

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (2 Samuel 7:12-13)

KEY BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Kingdom, Offspring (seed) of David, Covenant

THE STORY SO FAR

God created a kingdom, and he is the King, but he made human beings to represent him in that kingdom. Adam and Eve rejected this call, which led to sin and death. But God promised to defeat the Serpent through the seed of the woman, who is also the seed of Abraham. Through Abraham's family, and specifically Judah's royal seed, David, the covenant blessings would come to the world. Because all people were guilty and deserved death, the sacrifices of the Mosaic law revealed more clearly their need for a substitute.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1) When David wanted to build a house for God, God instead promised to build a "house" for David. What did God mean by this promise, and how is it related to his covenant promises that we've already seen?

2) Chapter 8 of the book says that the goal of the promises to David was to bring God's covenant presence to the nations. In light of God's promises to this point, why was it so important for this to happen? Why is this promise significant for you today?

King David

3) What should the failure of Solomon and the rest of the kings in Israel and Judah teach us about what God's people still needed?

4) Why do you think it was so important that the son of David have a kingdom that lasts forever? How would a temporary kingdom or reign change the way God's saving promises are fulfilled for you?

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 110

How does this psalm help you understand the biblical theological themes from this chapter and the big story of the Bible, which culminates with Jesus?

2 Samuel 7

What are some key insights from this passage that add to your understanding of the story and the biblical theological themes?

The Suffering Servant

MEMORY VERSE

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. (Isaiah 53:6)

KEY BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Redemption, Substitution

THE STORY SO FAR

God created a kingdom, and he is the King, but he made human beings to represent him in that kingdom. Adam and Eve rejected this call, which led to sin and death. But God promised to defeat the Serpent through the seed of the woman, who is also the seed of Abraham. Through Abraham's family, and specifically Judah's royal seed, David, the covenant blessings would come to the world. Because all people were guilty and deserved death, the sacrifices of the Mosaic law revealed more clearly their need for a substitute—the suffering servant.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1) Why did God's judgment come on his people? What does this teach us about their continued need—and your own need?

2) Both when Israel ignored the law and when they tried to keep it, they kept falling into sin. With which of these tendencies do you identify most closely? Why do you think both ways lead to the same place?

The Suffering Servant

3) The servant *represented* Israel as its substitute. Are these new ideas to you? Why do you think they are so important for understanding the whole story of the Bible?

4) How do the suffering servant promises and the sacrifices of the law of Moses relate to each other? How does seeing that relationship help you become a better reader of the Bible?

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 69

How does this psalm help you understand the biblical theological themes from this chapter and the big story of the Bible, which culminates with Jesus?

Isaiah 52:13–53:12

What are some key insights from this passage that add to your understanding of the story and the biblical theological themes?

Resurrection Promised

MEMORY VERSE

And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” Then he said to me, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.” (Ezekiel 37:3-5)

KEY BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL THEMES

New covenant, Spirit, New creation

THE STORY SO FAR

God created a kingdom, and he is the King, but he made human beings to represent him in that kingdom. Adam and Eve rejected this call, which led to sin and death. But God promised to defeat the Serpent through the seed of the woman, who is also the seed of Abraham. Through Abraham’s family, and specifically Judah’s royal seed, David, the covenant blessings would come to the world. Because all people were guilty and deserved death, the sacrifices of the Mosaic law revealed more clearly their need for a substitute—the suffering servant. Through the servant and the work of the Spirit, God would establish a new covenant and give lasting life to his people.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1) Why was the new covenant necessary for God’s people to enjoy his covenant presence? In other words, why do you need the new covenant?

2) Ezekiel’s vision might seem distant and strange to us in the twenty-first century. What do the dry bones in Ezekiel’s vision symbolize, and why does it matter for you?

3) According to chapter 10, what is the role of the Spirit in God's covenant promises? Why is he so essential?

4) Unpack the connections between the suffering servant paying for sin, the Spirit giving life in the covenant, and the promise of Genesis 3:15. Do you tend to read the Old Testament in light of these covenant promises? Why or why not?

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 37

How does this psalm help you understand the biblical theological themes from this chapter and the big story of the Bible, which culminates with Jesus?

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 37

What are some key insights from this passage that add to your understanding of the story and the biblical theological themes?

New Creation

MEMORY VERSE

For behold, I create new heavens
and a new earth,
and the former things shall not be remembered
or come into mind. (Isaiah 65:17)

KEY BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL THEMES

New creation

THE STORY SO FAR

God created a kingdom, and he is the King, but he made human beings to represent him in that kingdom. Adam and Eve rejected this call, which led to sin and death. But God promised to defeat the Serpent through the seed of the woman, who is also the seed of Abraham. Through Abraham's family, and specifically Judah's royal seed, David, the covenant blessings would come to the world. Because all people were guilty and deserved death, the sacrifices of the Mosaic law revealed more clearly their need for a substitute—the suffering servant. Through the servant and the work of the Spirit, God would establish a new covenant and give lasting life to his people in the new heavens and new earth.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1) How should Isaiah 65:17 shape our view of God's creation in Genesis 1-2? How should it shape the way we see the world now?

2) We will all face suffering of different sizes and shapes during this life. How should the hope of new creation inform and reshape that suffering?

3) When God first appeared to Abraham, he promised him the land of Canaan. Here in Isaiah 65, it seems that this Promised Land now includes the whole earth. What does this teach us about God and his covenant promises?

4) In this quick tour through the Old Testament, what was new to you? What challenged you the most? What was most exciting to see?

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 72

How does this psalm help you understand the biblical theological themes from this chapter and the big story of the Bible, which culminates with Jesus?

Isaiah 65

What are some key insights from this passage that add to your understanding of the story and the biblical theological themes?

PART 2

THE TIME HAS COME

Fulfillment!

MEMORY VERSE

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:14–15)

KEY BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Kingdom, Covenant, Redemption

THE STORY SO FAR

God created a kingdom, and he is the King, but he made human beings to represent him in that kingdom. Adam and Eve rejected this call, which led to sin and death. But God promised to defeat the Serpent through the seed of the woman, who is also the seed of Abraham. Through Abraham’s family, and specifically Judah’s royal seed, David, the covenant blessings would come to the world. Because all people were guilty and deserved death, the sacrifices of the Mosaic law revealed more clearly their need for a substitute—the suffering servant. Through the servant and the work of the Spirit, God would establish a new covenant and give lasting life to his people in the new heavens and new earth.

Jesus is the One through whom all of these promises find fulfillment.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1) Imagine you were one of the people waiting for God’s saving promises, and you heard this wild-eyed prophet named John proclaim that the Promised One was coming. What kinds of things might you be thinking and feeling? How do you think you might respond when Jesus himself came on the scene declaring that the “time is fulfilled”?

Fulfillment!

2) Jesus declared that the kingdom of God had come. While we tend to think of kingdoms as modern nation-states, Jesus's emphasis was more on the reign of God, specifically over his people. How might this understanding of the kingdom correct our misunderstandings about God's kingdom?

3) In his proclamation in Mark 1:15, Jesus is saying that God was keeping his covenant promises. Why would this proclamation of good news include a call to repent (both in that time and in our time)?

4) What exactly does it mean to repent and believe the good news? Have you done this? Are you continuing to do it?

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 118

How does this psalm help you understand the biblical theological themes from this chapter and the big story of the Bible, which culminates with Jesus?

Mark 1

What are some key insights from this passage that add to your understanding of the story and the biblical theological themes?

The Cross

MEMORY VERSE

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:30)

KEY BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Substitution, Redemption, Covenant

THE STORY SO FAR

God created a kingdom, and he is the King, but he made human beings to represent him in that kingdom. Adam and Eve rejected this call, which led to sin and death. But God promised to defeat the Serpent through the seed of the woman, who is also the seed of Abraham. Through Abraham’s family, and specifically Judah’s royal seed, David, the covenant blessings would come to the world. Because all people were guilty and deserved death, the sacrifices of the Mosaic law revealed more clearly their need for a substitute—the suffering servant. Through the servant and the work of the Spirit, God would establish a new covenant and give lasting life to his people in the new heavens and new earth.

Jesus is the One through whom all of these promises find fulfillment, first in his sacrificial death for sin.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1) What did Jesus mean when he said, “It is finished”?

2) Chapter 13 of the book says Jesus “did all the things God had required of his people” (p. 102). What are some of the ways Jesus succeeded where Adam, Abraham, Israel itself, King David, and others had failed? What does Jesus’s victory in these ways mean for us today?

3) Why do you think that so few readers of the Old Testament had made the connection between the promises of the Anointed One (“Messiah”) and the suffering servant? Why is this connection counter-intuitive for us today as well?

4) Why was it necessary for Jesus to bear “our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (1 Pet. 2:24)?

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 22

How does this psalm help you understand the biblical theological themes from this chapter and the big story of the Bible, which culminates with Jesus?

John 19

What are some key insights from this passage that add to your understanding of the story and the biblical theological themes?

Resurrection

MEMORY VERSE

[God's] Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 1:3-4)

KEY BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Son (of David), Spirit, New creation, Kingdom

THE STORY SO FAR

God created a kingdom, and he is the King, but he made human beings to represent him in that kingdom. Adam and Eve rejected this call, which led to sin and death. But God promised to defeat the Serpent through the seed of the woman, who is also the seed of Abraham. Through Abraham's family, and specifically Judah's royal seed, David, the covenant blessings would come to the world. Because all people were guilty and deserved death, the sacrifices of the Mosaic law revealed more clearly their need for a substitute—the suffering servant. Through the servant and the work of the Spirit, God would establish a new covenant and give lasting life to his people in the new heavens and new earth.

Jesus is the One through whom all of these promises find fulfillment, first in his sacrificial death for sin and then in his victorious resurrection and reign as King.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1) Why was it necessary for Jesus to rise from the dead? Why did he have to rise at all, or, at the least, couldn't he have just stayed in the tomb until the end of history and then risen with the rest of us?

2) When talking about the resurrection, why did Paul highlight that King David was Jesus's ancestor? How does that help us see the connections in the story of the Bible more clearly?

3) Why did the Spirit play such a central role in Jesus's resurrection?

4) What should our response be when we see all these threads in the story of the Bible woven so tightly together? Do these connections cause you to well up in praise to God? If not, what do you think is keeping you from this kind of response?

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 16

How does this psalm help you understand the biblical theological themes from this chapter and the big story of the Bible, which culminates with Jesus?

John 20; Romans 1:1-14

What are some key insights from this passage that add to your understanding of the story and the biblical theological themes?

Justification

MEMORY VERSE

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:21–26)

KEY BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Redemption, Sin, Judgment, Substitution

THE STORY SO FAR

God created a kingdom, and he is the King, but he made human beings to represent him in that kingdom. Adam and Eve rejected this call, which led to sin and death. But God promised to defeat the Serpent through the seed of the woman, who is also the seed of Abraham. Through Abraham's family, and specifically Judah's royal seed, David, the covenant blessings would come to the world. Because all people were guilty and deserved death, the sacrifices of the Mosaic law revealed more clearly their need for a substitute—the suffering servant. Through the servant and the work of the Spirit, God would establish a new covenant and give lasting life to his people in the new heavens and new earth.

Jesus is the One through whom all of these promises find fulfillment, first in his sacrificial death as a necessary and just payment for sin and then in his victorious resurrection and reign as King.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1) As you've read this book and the Bible readings, what are some of the ways you've seen the Law and the Prophets (the whole Old Testament) bear witness to the righteousness of God?

Justification

2) If we are “justified by his grace as a gift,” how should this change the way you see yourself? How should it change the way you see God?

3) Are you uncomfortable thinking and talking about God’s wrath? If so, do you think this feeling is shaped by Scripture or other influences?

4) Elsewhere in Romans Paul writes, “God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance” (2:4). In what ways have you seen God’s kindness lead you and others around you to repentance?

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 89

How does this psalm help you understand the biblical theological themes from this chapter and the big story of the Bible, which culminates with Jesus?

Romans 3

What are some key insights from this passage that add to your understanding of the story and the biblical theological themes?

Glory

MEMORY VERSE

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.” (Revelation 21:1-4)

KEY BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL THEMES

New creation, Kingdom, Covenant, Seed

THE STORY SO FAR

God created a kingdom, and he is the King, but he made human beings to represent him in that kingdom. Adam and Eve rejected this call, which led to sin and death. But God promised to defeat the Serpent through the seed of the woman, who is also the seed of Abraham. Through Abraham’s family, and specifically Judah’s royal seed, David, the covenant blessings would come to the world. Because all people were guilty and deserved death, the sacrifices of the Mosaic law revealed more clearly their need for a substitute—the suffering servant. Through the servant and the work of the Spirit, God would establish a new covenant and give lasting life to his people in the new heavens and new earth.

Jesus is the One through whom all of these promises find fulfillment, first in his sacrificial death as a necessary and just payment for sin and then in his victorious resurrection and reign as King. This great story will find its culmination when the redeemed from every tribe, tongue, and nation gather in the new creation to live with God forever.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1) Can you imagine heaven without God’s presence? Based on what we’ve seen about God’s covenant promises, would such a place really be heaven?

2) Chapter 16 says, “The more I read the Bible, the more ‘earthy’ I’m convinced that heaven will be. It will be a vibrant, joy-filled place where every one of our senses will be fully engaged. Next time you are gazing at a beautiful sunset or a snow-capped mountain, just remember that there is a new creation still to come. Until we are there, we won’t really understand what it means to live in and truly enjoy God’s creation” (p. 123). Do you tend to think of heaven this way? How should this understanding of heaven change the way we live now?

3) Before reading this book, did you tend to think of the Bible more as a collection of loosely connected stories or as one story about God’s plan to save his people and renew the world? How has your perspective changed?

4) In what ways is God calling you to proclaim the good news of the story of the Bible to your neighbors and friends?

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 96

How does this psalm help you understand the biblical theological themes from this chapter and the big story of the Bible, which culminates with Jesus?

Revelation 21–22

What are some key insights from this passage that add to your understanding of the story and the biblical theological themes?