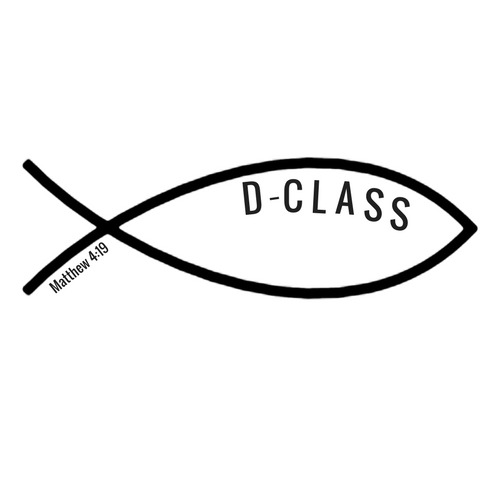
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Discipleship

The Heart of Christian Life



The Central Message and Context of Jesus’ good News

Session #1

1. **The Central Focus Of Our Study?**
   1. **Jesus! ––**
   2. **Primary Source Text: The Bible[[1]](#footnote-2) –– and in particular the Gospels[[2]](#footnote-3) of the NT. –– O**ur studies will be drawn from the perennial best selling, most widely distributed, and most influential book in human history.
   3. **Us?**
2. **Where To Begin? –– Identifying Jesus’ Central (core) Message**
   1. **The Gospel Of Mark** 1:14 – 17 (First written of the 4 Gospels)

**Mark 1:14***Later on, after John (the baptizer and fore-runner of Jesus, whose message was “the Kingdom of God is coming upon you…) was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he announced God’s Good News. 15 “The time promised by God has come at last!” he announced. “The Kingdom of God is come!*

* 1. **The Kingdom Of God:[[3]](#footnote-4)** Jesus’ Central Message & the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ throughout the New Testament.
     1. **“The Kingdom of God” –– It’s use in the Synoptic[[4]](#footnote-5) Gospels** (Matthew, Mark, Luke)The authors of the Gospels use the phrase as a way to summate the entire message and mission of John the Baptizer, and Jesus Of Nazareth. (Mt. 3:1; Mk. 1:14-15; Mt.9: 35; Mt.13 and the various parables of "the kingdom.”)
     2. The phrase is used to summate the message and mission of those Jesus sends out on “short–term” mission trips preceding his death and resurrection. (Mt.10: 5-8; Lu.10: 8-12)
     3. Following Jesus’ death and resurrection the “Kingdom of God” is the “gospel” (*good news)* message of Jesus’ followers throughout the book of Acts (Acts 8:12; 20:25; 28:23 and 31).
     4. Finally, the Kingdom of God is the shaping context for all the NT Letters (*Epistles*) from Romans through Revelation.
  2. **The What Of Who?** –– Why didn’t Jesus’ first hearers ask him what he meant by the “Kingdom of God?”

1. **The Old Testament: Jesus’ Foundational Context For His Message And Mission.**
   1. **The Importance of Knowing the Foundational Context Of Jesus’ Statement.**

**“To misunderstand the 'Kingdom of God' is to be in grave danger of misunderstanding Jesus Christ –– his purpose and the nature and calling of the individual to discipleship, as well as the purpose of the church in today’s world."**

**–** *Gordon Fee*

* 1. **Beginning With The Beginning! (The Creation Poems of Genesis 1-2.) In the Beginning God… –– First Encounters with the Creator’s mind, heart & intentions.**

**Chaos*:*** Swirling disorder, darkness, lifelessness to Ordered **Cosmo*s* (1:2 Separation(Boundaries)** (night & day, water & land, male & female, etc.) **Differentiation for the sake of** **Flourishing** –– fruitful purposes and powers –– capable of reproduction “each according to its own kind” – co-creationist, discoverers, builders and caregivers) (1:26,28; 2:15) –– **Human Beings as unique creations** –– the bearers of God’s image “Let us make…in our own image…male and female made HE them.” (1:26-27) –– Human life marked by **Joyfull Desiring,**  (2:23-24); **Harmony** (unity) **in Diversity** (male & female, one flesh); –– **Belonging & Security**; **Identity and Purpose**: Servants of the Creator and one-another. –– **A Good and Blessed Creation** (1:28) –– **Moral Choosing Beings:** God’s numerous permissive & only one prohibitive command.

* + 1. **Significant Themes & The Images Of Gen. 1–2** (**Observing the Text)**
    2. **Genesis 1-2: Three Foundational Assertions Carried Throughout The Old Testament.**

**Genesis 1:1** *In the beginning God create the heavens and the earth.*

**Psalms 24:1** *The earth is the LORD'S, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.*

**Psalms 29:10** *The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King forever.*

**Psalms 103:19** *The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.*

* + - 1. **Assertion #1: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**
      2. **Assertion #2:** God Has The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_To Rule. The Creator God’s right to reign over all is the logical outcome of His being the Creator. — ***“We are the intellectual property of God.”***
      3. **Assertion #3:** Humanity has a **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ i**n the earthly creation. –– Humankind is created to know and love the Creator and is commissioned to share in the joy and care of the creation as representations of the Creators character and purposes (image bearers). –– Big Idea: Humanity is meant to be regents and stewards (think of Joseph in Egypt), of God’s creation.
  1. **The Temptation & Rebellion of the Image Bearers:** The Reality & Repercussions of Humanities Rejection Of God’s Rule. ––– The Power & Problem of Evil. ––– (Gen. 3-11 from Cain to Bable).

Humankind falls under another shaping and ruling power –– a ‘Kingdom of Darkness’, –– resulting in the loss of unaffected love for God and neighbor, of joy, of innocent desiring, clarity of identity, and transcendent purpose. Untethered from God –– morally, psychologically, intellectually, relationally, and spiritually adrift in the world. –– At odds with the Creator and the creation. –– Hungering for life, but entangled in the ways of physical and spiritual death.

* + 1. **Assertion #4:** There is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the Rule of God!
    2. **Assertion #5:** Humanity is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and this has monstrous implications to the whole of creation.
    3. **Assertion #6: God is on a quest to fulfill His** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in the creation of humankind.

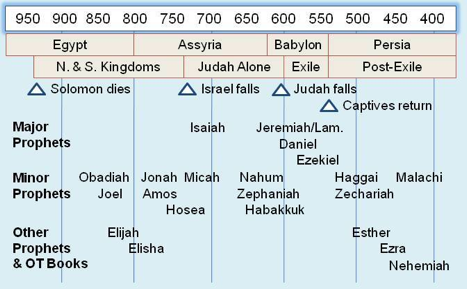
1. **Following God’s Quest To Rescue the Creation**

From the mercies shown to Cain, to the restart with Noah and the counter-intuitiveness of God’s actions at Bable, we find seeds of hope that give beginning insight into the Creator God’s push-back against the spiritual powers that have seeded distortion & death in the human experience.

* 1. **Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel) and his 12 Sons:** (Gen.12–50)
  2. **Israel In Egypt: From Flourishing (Joseph Story) to enslavement (430 years).**

An epic story of despair to God’s deliverance! Moses, the Exodus, the Covenant of God and Israel @ Sinai (as King) and the laws regarding how God’s people are to live toward their saving God and one-another as His witness people in the world –– showing the goodness of living life under His rule. Establishing the Tabernacle, the Priesthood, Faith Festivals in the midst of wilderness wandering, purging and preparing. (70 years): (Genesis 37 through Deuteronomy)

* 1. **Flourishing and Conforming to the Nations:** From settling in the ‘Land of Promise’ to the time of wanting a king like those around them. The times of Saul, David, & Solomon: The United Kingdom and the building of the Temple at the capital city of David, Jerusalem. (Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1&2 Samuel; 1Kings 1-11; 1Chronicles10 through 2Chronicles 9).
  2. **Disobedience, Division, Defeat, Exile and Despair:** **Civil War & the Divided Kingdom Israel:** The 10 Northern Tribes/Capital @ Samaria) and Judah: (2 Southern Clans/Capital @ Jerusalem). **The Assyrian invasion & destruction of the Northern 10 Tribes** (Estimate of 660+ yrs. from the Exodus to the Assyrian invasion.) –– **The Babylonian conquest of Judah,** the destruction of the Temple (1Kings 12 through 2Kings 25; 2 Chronicles10 through 36:21). (70 yrs. in Exile) –– **Return to the Land and Rebuilding:** (Ezra & Nehemiah).
  3. **The Prophets:** Prior to and in the midst of Israel and Judah’s defeat the Lord raises up prophetic voices (Elijah, Elisha, Daniel, etc.) that speak light and hope into their darkness and despair. At times they forewarn Israel and Judah of impending disaster flowing from their disobedience, but other times they foretell of a time in the future when their King the Lord God Almighty will bring about a new era and restoration of His purposes in the earth. –– In the time between Malachi and John this future time becomes summated as “The Kingdom of God!” But what does the Kingdom of God look like in detail? What are its attributes and purposes? Next week: The Prophetic Vision of the Kingdom of God.



1. **The World’s Best Seller:** Presently Annual sales of the Bible number around 100 million, compare that to all the Harry Potter books sold to date, which is about 450 million in total sales since June 1997). –– It is guesstimated that upwards of 6 billion copies of the Bible (whole or in part) have been printed since the Guttenberg press. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. **What is a Gospel?** The word comes from the Greek language and means “*Good News.”* –– The first four books (known as “Gospels”) in the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John), tell us the story of the “good news” from and about Jesus through his teachings, actions, and his life purpose. –– These four “books” (part of the total of 66 in the Old (First) and New Testament) are “*teaching (pastoral) historic accounts of the birth, mission, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. See a listing of the NT texts that use of the phrase “*Kingdom of God”* at the back of your outline. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. **Synoptic Gospels**: The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which describe events from a *similar point of view*, as contrasted with that of John. **–– In Matthew it is called the “Kingdom of Heaven”** in deference to Matthew’s (and his audience’s) apparent sensitivity to speaking God’s formal name. Matthew uses “Heaven” as a synonym for God. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)