

# The Purpose

Genesis 1,2

-(**Summarize Gen 1|1-26**): God created everything, and it was GOOD.

-(**Gen 1|27-31**): God created man. God said his creation was VERY GOOD.

- (**Gen 2|4-9**): God's Intention: God planted Eden.

- So was everything still good?

**(Yes, God planted it)**

- Even the tree that will eventually mess everything up?
- Why would God put it there, if he knew it would have such a huge consequence?

**(Love. We couldn't choose to love, if we didn't have the choice of not loving (thus disobeying)).**

- (**Gen 2|15-19**): God's Purpose Then: God put man in the garden.

- Why does God have the man work in the garden?

**(God is establishing a purpose for man. God is saying, "Hey I want you to help me out here.")**

- What is the purpose?

**(Keeping God's creation, including Adam (himself), the way they were intended to be.)**

- What did, keeping God's creation on the right track, look like?

**(Perfection, beauty, free of hate, hurt and pain. Helpful, basically anything that is a characteristic of God should be maintained, this way God could stay present because sin wasn't present. He could be with us and "walk with us")**

- Why does God have the man name the animals, it isn't like after 6 days of creating God is tapped out of ideas?

**(God could have done a way better job, but the only thing that makes sense is that God loves to partner with people to take care of his world.)**

- (**2 Corinthians 5|11-21**): God's Purpose Today:

- Is God today, still looking for partners, to take care of the world he created?

- Do we still have the same purpose today?  
**(Yes, God hasn't given up on us, even though we made bad decisions. He does have a plan fix this broken, hurting world, and we are part of the plan)**
- What does it look like to live out this purpose today?  
**(Discuss this: Doing good things i.e helping those in need, but also letting people know about this purpose of God's)**

#### CONCLUSION:

-We see a God that created things the way they were suppose to be.. they were GOOD. And to God, GOOD wasn't just okay, it was perfect! We see a God that was willing to get down on his hands and knees to form us out of dirt and breathe his own breath into us.

-We also notice that God did everything intentionally and for a purpose. Nothing he created or did was accidental or out of place.

-Finally, we as his created beings, have a purpose. This purpose involves partnering with God to keep his creation the way it was intended to be, including ourselves; it also requires us to make choices moment by moment to either serve and obey creator God or do what we think is best, and disobey. This purpose was not only for the first people God created, but for all people, even today.

# The Fall

Genesis 3-12

-(**Genesis 3**): The Consequence of Knowledge: Sin

- Why did God banish them from Eden?  
(**Now that there is knowledge of evil, evil/sin, can be produced**)
- Can imperfection reside with perfection?  
(**Because the imperfection of sin was now present, it could no longer exist with Eden, which was perfect. Sin changed the rules of the game**)

-(**Genesis 4|1-16**):The Consequence of Sin: Death, Separation, Inhumanity

- Is God still present with his creation?  
(**Yes, Just because we can no longer take part in perfection, doesn't mean that God doesn't reside with us**)
- What is the consequence of Cain's Sin?  
(**Death**)

-(**Isaiah 59|1,2**)

- What is the consequence of a life of sin?  
(**Separation from God**)
- Does God choose this separation or do we?
- If a creation ceases to act out it's purpose, does it still retain it's identity?
- Can we be truly human if we are not living out our God given purpose?  
(**No, the more we sin the less human we become. Inevitably we can cease to exist as humans, and become something else**)

-(**Genesis 6|5**): Sin then, Sin now:

- Is this verse similar to society today?  
(**Yes, we are the same then as now**)
- (**Romans 6|23**): Still all sin.
- This thing we call sin, what does it really mean?  
(**hamartia** (ἁμαρτία) **The Ancient greek word for sin, means to "miss the mark", it's an archery term**)

- If someone would want to “aim” for a life that lived according to God’s purpose, who or what would the “mark” be?  
(**God/Jesus. To live a life that is constantly reconciling the world back to the intended state, requires us to be like Jesus. When we are not acting like Jesus we are “missing the mark”**)
- What are some ways we can miss the mark, or sin?—Discuss—
- (**Galatians 5|19-21, James 4|17**)

#### CONCLUSION:

-Sin/imperfection cannot reside with perfection. This, however, does not mean that perfection/God cannot reside with us. We were separated from perfection when we were banished from Eden, but God did not leave us.

-Sin causes death, separation, and inhumanity. When we sin we create imperfection and eventually death will reign. Separation from God is our choice, we’ve seen God does not leave us, we choose it. Finally, when we cease to act the way we were intended to act, we cease to be human.

-Sin then and now are no different. We still commit the same sins and the same consequences apply. Anytime we do not act like Jesus, we are missing the mark and are inviting imperfection into God’s perfect world, thus not helping to make this world the kind of place God intended it to be.

# The Plan

Genesis 12-17

God obviously could not leave his creation in the state it was. It was created for a purpose and not only was it not fulfilling that purpose, but by now, it had no idea what that purpose was. Because God loves to partner with us in creation, he called one of us. Abram was to help God establish a plan to reconcile the world back to the way God intended it

-(**Genesis 12:1-3**): God's Call : "I will make you into a great nation"

- What is it that God is calling Abram to do?  
**(Not only to follow in faith, but to make a great nation for God)**
- What is Abram's response, is it holistic?  
**(His response is leave his land, his security, his life as he knew it, to follow a God that is asking him to do crazy things. Yes, his response is holistic, because he does it all without questioning God's motives)**
- What will be the purpose of this nation?  
**(To show the people of the world what restoring God's intended purpose, looks like)**
- Is our purpose today, any different from this one? Did God somehow change the rules on us?  
**(Our purpose is the same now as it was then. We are here to show the world not only what it looks like to live like this, but to announce that now, everyone is invited to be part of this great nation)**

-(**Genesis 15**): God's Promise

- Why is Abram worried?  
(**He thinks that he will not be able to do what God has told him he could. i.e make a great nation**)
- How does God respond?  
(**He remind Abram that from his own body, a great nation will be born. He also gives Abram a glimpse into the future, to see what is in store for this nation**)
- Why do you think God shows him this future?  
(**Possibly to remind him of his purpose, which was to make a great nation that should one day be a model for the world**)

-(**Genesis 17**): *God's Covenant*

- Who is this covenant between?  
(**God and Abram, or as we know him now Abraham**)
- Why would God choose circumcision as a sign of the covenant?  
(**Since it is in the flesh, it will be very hard to forget it**)
- Why was do you think those who were not circumcised, were cut off from their people?  
(**Not only the willingness to do such a crazy thing, but it was also a visible sign and reminder the purpose they were establishing**)
- What today, is our covenant response? What is our sign of being part of God's people?  
(**Colossians 2|9-12- Baptism is the circumcision done by Christ today. This is "putting off of the sinful nature" and being "buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God..." We will talk more about this later.**)

CONCLUSION:

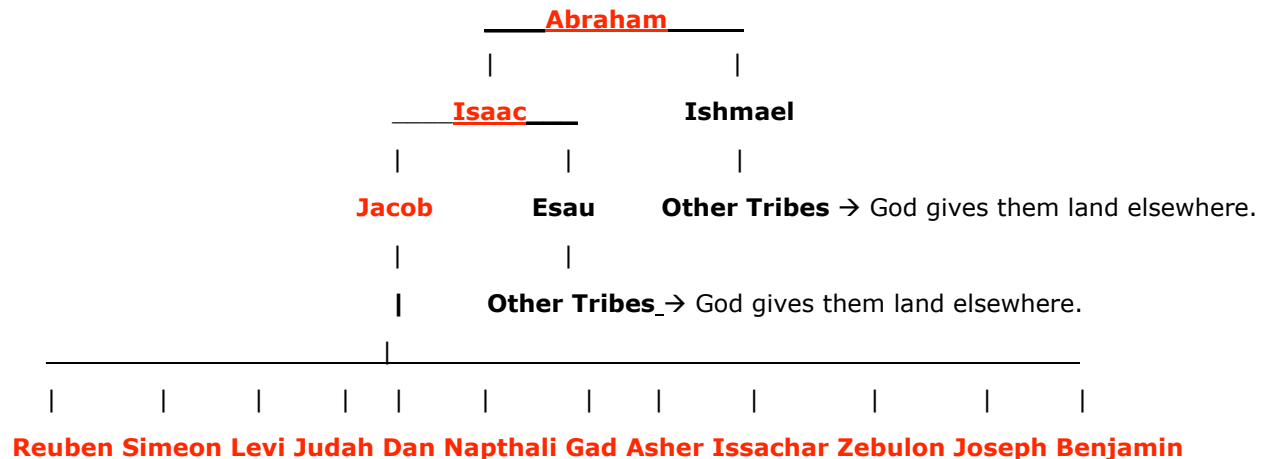
-God has not given up on his creation. God loves our relationship so much, that he devised a plan that involves us being actively involved in restoring the world. This is not to say that God doesn't instill the ultimate restoration, but we can be partners with God in this effort.

-Abram was the beginning of this new plan and through him a great nation will be established. As we will see later, this nation is to be used to bring this message to all of God's creation.

-Today we still have the same calling from God, with one difference. Now it involves an announcement of Jesus' Lordship and Christian circumcision "baptism" as a sign of acceptance of this mission.

# The People

Genesis 17-Joshua



All this happens in and around Egypt. Joseph gets sold into slavery by his brothers and becomes a great ruler in Egypt. After this, him and his brothers reconcile and their families multiply greatly in Egypt. Because of this rapid growth and the sheer size of the Hebrew nation, Pharaoh starts to get scared that this vast Hebrew nation will eventually overthrow his kingdom. To keep this from happening, he enslaves them. This is where our story begins, but by no means is it a complete narrative, just one to help illustrate God's divine plan for God's chosen people.

-(**Exodus 3|1-10**) *A Promise Kept*: God keeping his end of the covenant.

- What was God's part of the covenant he made with Abraham?  
(**Basically, if you worship me and keep my commands I'll be your God and take care of you. He'd make them into a great nation**)
- Why did God wait so long to act on his people (the Israelites) behalf?  
(**Possibly to get them to a place where they knew they needed God and also to a place where they were ready to be lead out of captivity. Why escape Pharaoh just to die somewhere in the dessert. Why leave their homes behind, just to inherit some land that they were not even sure that they wanted? God needed to get them to a place where they were ready to give it all up to follow him.**)

- Does God still do this today, in our lives?  
(**Definitely. Think of what you've had to go through to get here today. Most of the time, it takes something big for us to notice God. It takes something huge realize he's calling us out of captivity.**)

-(**Exodus 13|21,22**) *"Follow Me"*: God Shows them the way.

- What is God doing in this scripture?  
(**He's allowing US to be in HIS presence. Since Eden, God has always been in our presence, but when we were kicked out we could no longer be in his perfect presence. Here God is giving the people something to focus on, namely the cloud and fire, to show how they can be a part of what God is doing again.**)

-(**Exodus 15|22-27, Exodus 20|1-17**) *The Rules of the Game*: God's Law  
We notice that God is calling his people to pay attention to his commands and keep his decrees. Then in a very logical way, gives them the "Rules of the Game"

-(**Exodus 24|1-8**) *The Covenant Confirmed*

Up to know God has waited for the opportune time to rescue his people, he has show them he is there God, and now has asked them to confirm the covenant God made with Abraham.

- So if God's plan was to build a great nation that would eventually be a light to the world, a nation that would show the rest of the world how to live out God's intended purpose, then what would be the next logical step?  
(**Training. Since God has now established a standard, he would go about training this nation to be the kind of people that could help make the world the kind of place God intended it to be.**)

-(**Exodus 25|8,9-Deuteronomy**) *Idiots Guild to Worshipping God*: Read Ex 25|8,9 and summarize the rest by showing how God starts with the Tabernacle and teaches them how to worship in festivals, sacrifices, and the

like. This is all to prepare his people for the purpose for which they were called.

- Why does God want Israel to build the Tabernacle?  
**(He's giving them not only a starting point to which worship can be taught, but once again God is showing them, by dwelling in the Tabernacle, how much he wants for us to be in his presence.)**

As a side note, it's kind of interesting that God makes the Tabernacle mobile. One possible reason for this is, so he can continue moving his people toward the promise land, (thus keeping their future hope in view) all the while, training them to become his great nation.

After much wandering in the dessert, we pick up the story in Joshua.

-(**Joshua 1|1-9**) *A New Era*: They've arrived, but now what?

God chooses Joshua to lead his nation into the promise land. God has finally allowed them to enter, but now what?

-(**Summarize Joshua 2-23**)

God is with his people, because they do right in his eyes. He helps them conquer every nation that stood before them, and gives them all the land he had promised them. Joshua divides up the land between the 12 nations. Finally at the end of Joshua's life, we see a call to renew the covenant.

-(**Joshua 24**) *The Covenant Renewed and A Warning is Given*

So God fulfills his end of the covenant, by bringing them into the promise land and helping them to defeat their enemies.

- What is the Israelites end of the covenant and how practically could they do this?

**(They were to show the rest of the world how to live as people of God, namely working to restore his creation to it's intended state. They could do this by reaching out to the nations surrounding them. Teaching them how to be part of a movement that was suppose to change the world for the better. They could live out this purpose in their daily lives.**

**And they could do this by remembering the covenant God called them to everyday in worship.)**

- If this was their purpose and calling, is ours much different today?  
**(No. All of us are called to join God's Kingdom and to live like people under God's covenant. While this covenant evolves in Jesus, our purpose as God's people does not.)**

#### CONCLUSION:

-We see that God's plan goes into full swing with the dramatic rescue operation of his people from Egypt. God waited for just the right time to rescue his people. A time when they would be willing to drop everything and go anywhere. A time when they were desperate for God to act in their lives. Isn't that how God calls us as well?

-Once God gets his people the heck out of Egypt, he doesn't say, "okay, do whatever you want." God begins, at once to lead them to the promise land, all the while, teaching and training them to be the people he knows they can be, namely the people through whom he will use to put his creation back to rights.

-Once God feels they are ready to enter the promise land, he does so through a new leader, Joshua. Joshua leads the 12 tribes in conquering the nations that occupy their God given land. God is with his people as they route their enemies.

-After they have divided up the land, Joshua reminds everyone of their true calling. He reminds them to remember where they have come from and more importantly where they should be going. He renews the covenant before all the people of God and they embark on a mission to change the world. How they keep their promise to God is where the story goes next.

# The Promise

## Judges-Malachi

Now that God has brought his people into the promise land, given them the power to control that land, and is blessing them as they live in that now, God expects some return on his investment. Not in the legalistic sense, but in the spiritual reconciliation of his creation, sense. God fulfilled his promise to them, lets see how Israel keeps their promise to God. Keep in mind this is only a quick overview to get the major concepts, beliefs, and hope of Israel.

### -(**Judges**) A Spiritual Rollercoaster

-The Book of Judges is an account of how Yahweh [God] was taken for granted by His children year after year, century after century. Yet, God has never failed to open His arms in love to His people whenever they repent from their wicked ways and call upon His name. (**Judges 2-15**) God honored His promise to Abram to protect and bless his offspring -

- (**Judges 2|16-19**), "Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. Unlike their fathers, they quickly turned from the way in which their fathers had walked, the way of obedience to the LORD's commands. Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the LORD had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways."
- (**Judges 21|25**) Approximately 250 years later, we end with this verse. Obviously the people of God were not living up to their purpose.

### -(**Ruth-2 Chronicles**) A Quick Overview

These books record the history of Saul, David, Solomon, and the rest of the Kings during this period. They also record the rise and fall of Jerusalem.

- **Saul:**
  - 1<sup>st</sup> King of Israel. Called by God, but eventually does evil in the eyes of God.
- **David:**
  - David fights for God's honor and defeats Goliath (**1 Samuel 17**). When Saul loses favor in God's eyes, God chooses David to replace Saul. Saul becomes jealous and tries to have David killed.
  - David wants to build God a permanent place to live, but God tells him no, because of the amount of blood on his hands.
- **Solomon:**
  - This is David's son, who eventually builds the Temple where God is pleased to live in this temple, with this warning.
  - **1 Kings 9|1-9**
- **Other Kings:**
  - After Solomon there were a few good kings and many more evil kings.
  - Israel and Judah, as a nation, eventually split and have separate kings that were against each other
- **The Fall of Jerusalem**
  - **2 Kings 25:** It is held that the (*Shek-hin-ah*) presence of God left Israel when the Temple was destroyed.
  - At this point Israel is taken captive and lives under the rule of foreign nations. From this time on, Israel hopes for the temple to be rebuilt and for God to once again bless them with the *Shekhinah*, but even after the second temple was built, God still seemed to be missing. They were still in exile and still under foreign oppression.

-(**Prophetic Books**) Another Quick Overview

- **Major Prophets:** Named for the amount of writing and not necessarily the importance of the author. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel.
- **Minor Prophets:** Again, named for the amount of writing. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi.

-(**Israel's Hope**) Zion and the "age to come"

Zion was another name for Jerusalem. More importantly, it was the name they used to explain their homeland. The central headquarters, as it were, for God's people to do their work. This was the place where God would act to restore his creation, which was the central hope of Israel. One of the main ways to talk about this hope was to separate it into two time periods. The present age (*ha-'olam hazeh*) and the age to come (*ha-'olam haba'*). The present age was a time when God seemed to be hiding his face from them. The age to come would be the renewal and restoration of his created world.

-(**Isaiah 2|1-5**)

- What could the mountain symbolize?  
**(Mountains, generally were meant to be places of worship or places where you could experience God. The mountain that will be chief of all mountains could very well be Jesus, seeing how he is seen as the temple in carnal.)**
- What could the phrase "many peoples" mean?  
**(Not just the people of God, i.e Israel, but other peoples who will come from all around. People who want to worship the true God.)**

-(**Isaiah 11**)

Note: Jesse was the father of king David. God had promised David that a descendant of his would rule of the world (**2 Samuel 7**). Jesus, in the gospels, is a direct descendant of David.

- What is verse 3b,4 all about?  
**(Jesus was not sent to judge, but his words will judge those on the last day (John 12|47,48). Striking the earth with the rod of his mouth and the breath of his lips, sounds a lot like what it's talking about in John.)**
- What about 10 and 11?  
**(A banner is used to show people who and where you are. Jesus will be a banner to all people. Also, God will reach out a second time to Israel to reclaim those who still want to be**

**part of God's people (Romans 11) and still want to fulfill his purpose.)**

**-(Zephaniah 3|14-20)**

If God was to restore Israel and bring them into the age to come, then God also had to deal with their sin. The ways in which this could be accomplished varied, but what we know for sure is this. The age to come, Israel's return from exile, was seen as the inauguration of a new covenant between God and his people.

**-(Jeremiah 31|27-33)**

- What does it mean, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'?  
**(It's like saying, if you eat green apples, you'll get a stomach ache, but instead when the father's eat the green apples, their children will suffer the consequences. This was the way of the old covenant, but now (verse 30) 'Instead, everyone will die for this own sin; whoever eats sour grapes- his own teeth will be set on edge. Now you suffer the consequences of your own actions, everyone will reap what they sow.)**
- Why does God want to make a new covenant?  
**(Possibly to start fresh. To not just renew the old covenant, but to do something different, better. God wants this new covenant to be within us, written on our hearts.)**

**CONCLUSION:**

-While this was a very quick overview of the rest of the Old Testament, it gives us a good picture of what God's plan has always been. To partner with us in the restoration of his entire creation.

-Even though all throughout the Old Testament, Israel fails to do what God asks, he is very patient and always wanting them to turn back to him. Israel's hope of the "age to come", is central to understanding how they lived for the next 200 or so years.

-We see a people cherishing this deep hope of resurrection and restoration. Soon a prophet will come in the Jordan wilderness. He will call the people to

repent and undergo baptism for the forgiveness of sins. He will also warn them that Israel was about to pass through a fiery judgment out of which a new people of Abraham will be forged. It will also be during this time, another prophet will come. He would announce to the villages of Galilee that at last, Israel's God was becoming king and bringing in the "age to come". We should not be surprised at what happens next.

# The Kingdom

What did Jesus mean when he said the Kingdom of God was at hand Or maybe a better question would be, what did the average 1<sup>st</sup> Century Galilean think it meant when he said it? This idea of "The Kingdom" is central to understanding Jesus' message. Jesus believed and acted on at least two vital points that need to be discussed. First, he understood that the creator God did not intend Israel to be just an "example" of a nation living under God, but rather a means through which the entire creation would be reconciled back to God, saved. Second, Jesus believed his purpose was to bring Israel's history to a great climactic end. Not the end of the space-time cosmos, but rather one in which Israel herself would be saved from their foreign oppressors, God would at last bring his love and justice, his mercy and truth, and one in which God would bring renewal and healing to all creation. This "Kingdom" Jesus speaks of, was inaugurated with one single act, the Resurrection.

-(**Luke 24|13-51**) *God's Faithfulness*: Fulfillment at last!

- What did Jesus' death and resurrection represent?  
**(Jesus' death was the fulfillment of God's covenant to Israel. While they never lived up to their end of the bargain, God never skipped a beat. He, in Jesus, gave Israel a King in the line of David, a temple or place where heaven and earth overlap, and an end to exile and freedom from their oppressor. BUT, it was not exactly how the Jews thought it was would be. Jesus was all human and all god, thus being the perfect king, one that not only would now rule over the entire earth, but since he could do so from heaven, his kingdom will never. The temple was the place where the Jews could come and worship God. It was a place where heaven and earth overlapped. Jesus, in so many words throughout the New Testament, states that he is the temple and in him, being completely human and completely God, heaven and earth overlapped. Finally, the ending of exile was probably the biggest sign to the Jewish people, that God had finally acted to vindicate them, but their exile was from**

**God's true enemy sin, not from any empire, which many Jews of that day thought it would be.)**

-(**Mark 15|31-39**) *The man behind the curtain*: "God with us"

- What did the ripping of the temple curtain represent?  
**(The separation between God and his people, was no longer necessary, seeing how Jesus took care of sin and now everyone had access to God in a very personal way. It was also an invitation for all to come into the new temple, Jesus, to see God for who he truly was and still is.)**

-( **Sermon mt 5-7** ) *The Call to a Renewed People*: Repent and Believe.

-Dramatic play that was looking for actors

-Repent today verses, Repent then

- Josephus "repent and believe in me"
- Give up what you think and trust in what is

-Renewal=new temple completion and

-Not ending Judaism and starting something new, but rather a return from exile for the true people of God. The reconstruction of Israel.

-(**Col 1|2-15**) *Never forget where we come from*: Flood, Exodus, and Exile.

- How is baptism like circumcision? (ref. Genesis 17)  
**(Both are your covenantal signs of belonging to God's kingdom. Circumcision was entrance into being God's people, as baptism is now that entrance. If you were not circumcised pre-Christ or baptized post-Christ, then you were not considered one of God's people.)**

-(**1 Peter 3|18-21** and **Exodus Story**)

- What does baptism symbolically represent?  
**(The Flood and Exodus stories. Leaving behind the enemies of God, in the water, to become his people. Leaving behind your exile and coming into God's covenant promise. Now baptism, represents those things by leaving behind the true enemy of God, sin, and becoming part of his Kingdom by entering through the door, now open to all who believe, of baptism.)**

- What would happen if we could just believe and not get baptized, for salvation?

**(We would not understand where we came from and what God has been doing throughout time for us. He has been preparing us, by allowing our people, Israel, to go through similar situations, so when the time came to fulfill the covenant, we all would recognize without a doubt that the Kingdom has come, but salvation is available. We also would never have a definite sign (like circumcision) that we have entered into God's Kingdom and he recognizes us as one of His people. Baptism is a gift from God. It is something he created to give us assurance of our salvation and assure that he has finally fulfilled the covenant he promised us so long ago.)**

**- (Romans 6|1-7)**

- How does being buried with Christ in baptism, symbolize the flood or the exodus?

**(In order for Good to survive, evil needs to be destroyed. The flood took sin and destroyed it. The exodus waters destroyed the enemy of Israel, which represented their old way of life. Likewise, in baptism when we die, we no longer can live for sin, it has been destroyed. We have had exodus from our old way of life into a new one. Also, sin we were a slave to sin, just like Israel was a slave to the Egyptians, when we die or exit our old life, we are no longer a slave to our enemy, sin, but rather free to serve God as his people.)**

- What is the hope of a baptized believer, this scripture speaks of?  
**(Resurrection! That some day we will be united with Christ in his resurrection. This day comes when Jesus comes back and makes all things new (2 Pet 3|13, Rev 21|5). These new things include our bodies. We will be just like the resurrected Jesus, the gospels speak. We will kind of be the same, but very much different! In baptism, you are reaching into the future and asking God to judge you now, but not by your life, but Jesus', thus "being buried with him". You are asking God to enter you into the "age to come", now. While**

**everyone else (non-Christians) will have to wait to the end of the space-time cosmos.)**

# The Call

Around 30 A.D. a group of Jews from a region called the Galilee, claimed that their Rabbi was the Son of God, that he was born of a virgin, and that after his death he had been resurrected. They even claimed to have seen him after his death and eaten with him. Then they said he had ascended to heaven and that some day he would return. Now the world at this time was ruled by the Roman empire. One of the most popular gods of the Roman Empire was Mythra. The followers of Mythra believed that Mythra was born of a virgin, was a mediator between god and humans, and that he ascended to heaven. Another popular god was Addis. They believed that Addis was born of a virgin and each spring they would gather to celebrate the resurrection of Addis. Now this leads us back to the Roman Empire which was ruled by a succession of Caesars, the first being Julius Caesar. When he died a comet was seen in the sky. People said, "yeah, well that's Julius Caesar, the son of god, ascending to the right hand of god." Next was Caesar Augustus. Augustus believed that he was the son of god, sent by the gods to bring in an era of peace and prosperity. Their was even a popular slogan that said, "there is no other name under heaven by which one can be saved, then that of Caesar." So for a 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jew to claim that their God was the Son of God, that he was born or a virgin, and that he ascended to heaven, really wasn't that unique. The claims of these first Christians were not really new. I mean, everybody's god had risen from the dead, why was theirs so special. The answer to this can only be how they lived their lives, the love, the community, and unexplainable service they performed for those in need.

-(**John 13|34,35**) *By your love*: How to spot a Christian.

- What possibly could have made these 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians any different from the other gods at this time?

**(The way they loved each other, was how they were different. While other religions only required belief and participation rarely, these Christians lived in communities where their lives resembled what they believed. They would show it by loving, serving, and suffering with each other. They made sure no one in their community was in need.)**

-(**Acts 2|42-47**) *Together Everyday*

- How is this description of how a Christian is suppose to live, different from how the world today views it?  
(**Today, everyone is only looking out for themselves. Even some who claim to be Christians today are guilty of this.**)
- How could this type of life show others that what you believe, is in fact, very different from the other religions?  
(**Because you were not only talking about how great your God is, but you were actually living it. Another way they would seem different would be how they viewed authority. Jesus' had all authority over heaven and earth (Mat 28|18) and yet he "ruled" by giving his life to other both physically and in service. It wasn't hard to see why the kingdom these 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians were proclaiming was very different. On one hand, you had Caesar who by his military might and political power, forced people into submission or Jesus', who by love and service submitted his life to those in need. Caesar's kingdom, one which crucified Jesus, or God's Kingdom which raised Jesus' from the dead. Which one do you think is more compelling.**)

-(**Luke 14|25-33**) *The Challenge of Jesus*: True sacrifice.

While Jesus' kingdom was more compelling, it had it's tough side. True love, deep sacrifice, and complete service could only be accomplished through denying yourself daily.

- Why did Jesus say theses things to those who were following him, it seems by following him, they were believing in him and isn't that what he wanted all along?  
(**Jesus does want us to follow him, but he doesn't want us to think it will be easy. It seems that he is weeding out the true followers by telling them what it really means to "come after him"**)
- What does it mean to carry your cross?  
(**The cross for Jesus meant suffering, pain, and death. If we are to carry our cross, it means we have to be willing to go through what ever it takes, even the possibility of death, which was a very real thing for these 1<sup>st</sup> century people, to**)

**live in this kingdom. To do this, requires a very real understanding of what you may need to give up, or deny yourself, to live this way.)**

- What are some things that you would need to deny yourself in, in order to follow Jesus?

-( Body scriptures )

-(**2 Corinthians 5|11-21**)