

IN THE LAND OF A THOUSAND STORIES, THERE'S ONE NOT BEING TOLD.

WITH GOD ON OUR SIDE



STUDY GUIDE

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Special thanks to Stephen Sizer for compiling this study guide on behalf of "With God On Our Side".

With God on our Side: Seven Interactive Bible Studies



The "End Times" theology of popular writers like Hal Lindsey in the *Late Great Planet Earth* and Tim LaHaye's *Left Behind* series captivated the imagination of generations of Evangelical Christians. For some, linking today's news headlines and Scripture gave everyday life a sense of urgency and significance; yet such flights of fancy have had devastating real-life consequences for the people of the Middle East.

Just as certain Biblical interpretations defended slavery and Apartheid, Scripture has been used to justify occupation, oppression, and injustice in Israel/Palestine, in defiance of the concerns of the Hebrew prophets and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Mainstream media and scholarship has only recently caught on to the central role played by such beliefs in influencing American foreign policy, and many are justly concerned at what seems to be a suicidal will-to-Apocalypse.

These seven interactive Bible studies offer an opportunity to engage with what the Bible says. The answers will enable you to embrace constructive and Christ-like responses to injustice instead of fanning the flames of conflict, ignoring the suffering on both sides and becoming fixated with Armageddon.

These Bible studies are designed for individual or group discussion to help you make sense of the relationship between Israel and the Church under the following headings:

1. Introduction: What are my presuppositions?
2. The Bible Tells Them So: Can you read the Bible too literally?
3. Israel and the Church - who are God's chosen people?
4. The Promised Land - From the Nile to the Euphrates?
5. Battle for Jerusalem - Eternal Capital of the Jews?
6. The Coming Last Day's Temple: Ready to Rebuild?
7. Overture to Armageddon: Want to be Left Behind?

You are encouraged to make use of the background articles that complement each of these studies adapted from the book by Stephen Sizer, *Zion's Christian Soldiers* (Downers Grove, IVP).

WITH GOD ON OUR SIDE STUDY GUIDE #1

Introduction: What are my presuppositions?

“Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.”
(Romans 10:1-2)

1. What were your first impressions having seen the film *With God on our Side*?
2. Did you find yourself ‘taking sides’? If so, which side, and why?
3. What aspect of the film has had the greatest impact on you so far?
4. Why is this such a controversial subject?
5. What are some of the ‘elephants in the room’ when we come to discuss what is happening in the Middle East?
6. Which authors or books have been most influential in your thinking on the Middle East until now?

Read 1 Peter 2:8-10 in context.

“They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1 Peter 2:8-10)

7. Who is Peter speaking to?

8. How does Peter describe followers of Jesus Christ?

9. Why does he make these statements?

10. What do you think is the relationship between Israel and the Church?

11. Was the coming of Jesus Christ the fulfilment or postponement of the promises God made to Abraham about his descendents and their inheritance?

12. Reflect upon these passages. How do they help you answer the question?

“Abraham rejoiced to see my day. He saw it and was glad.” (John 8:56)

“Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.” (Matthew 21:43).

“Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.” (Acts 3:23).

“By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.” (Hebrews 8:13).

“For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.” (Hebrews 9:15).

13. Typically, Christians gravitate to one of two alternative perspectives, whether they recognise the terms or not. The survey below will help you identify your presuppositions. You are invited to do the survey again during the final Bible study to help you see if your views have changed in any way.

Covenantal-Dispensational: Self Assessment Survey

| Covenantal | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Dispensational |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------------------------------|
| Old Covenant superseded | | | | | | | | Old Covenant applicable |
| One people of God | | | | | | | | Two peoples of God |
| Kingdom fulfilled | | | | | | | | Kingdom postponed |
| Chosen people = Church | | | | | | | | Chosen people = Israel |
| Land promise = fulfilled | | | | | | | | Land promise = unconditional |
| Jerusalem = heavenly city | | | | | | | | Jerusalem = earthly Jewish city |
| Temple = Jesus & Church | | | | | | | | Temple = literal building |
| Future hopeful | | | | | | | | Future apocalyptic |
| Return of Christ visible | | | | | | | | Return of Christ in two stages |
| Millennium kingdom symbolic | | | | | | | | Millennium kingdom political |

Put a cross in the box that best reflects your belief. #1 or #7 indicate ‘strongly agree’ and #4 ‘not sure’. Try and avoid the middle column where possible.

The second Bible study will explore what the Bible says about itself and how we should read it. For further reading, see the articles that complement each of these studies adapted from the book by Stephen Sizer, *Zion’s Christian Soldiers* (Downers Grove, IVP).

WITH GOD ON OUR SIDE STUDY GUIDE #2

The Bible Tells Them So: Can you read the Bible too literally?

“You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.” (John 5:39)

1. What assumptions do you make when you read the Bible?

2. What does it mean to read the Bible literally?

“Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” But the temple he had spoken of was his body.” (John 2:19-21)

“How can anyone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’” (John 3:4-7)

“Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.” (John 4:13-15)

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” (John 6:31-32)

3. In the passages above, why was Jesus so often misunderstood?

4. How do we avoid misunderstanding the Bible by taking an over- literal interpretation?

5. Why is it important that we read the Bible progressively?

“Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.”
(Galatians 3:23-25)

6. Why did Jesus gently rebuke the disciples on the road to Emmaus?

“...but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel...He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. “
(Luke 24:21, 25-27)

7. What was wrong with their expectations?

8. How did Jesus understand that he had indeed ‘redeemed’ Israel?

9. What is the relationship between the Old and New Covenant?

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.” (Hebrews 1:1-2)

“First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them”—

though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Hebrews 10:8-10)

10. In what way is God's revelation progressive?

Jesus said "I am the Light of the World" (John 8:12).

'Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival... or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.' (Colossians. 2:16-17)

"The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship." (Hebrews 10:1)

11. What is the relationship between the Abrahamic, the Mosaic and the New Covenant?

"Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day. He saw it and was glad." (John 8:56)

"The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise. What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come." (Galatians 3:16-19)

12. In whom was the promise made to Abraham fulfilled?

13. Was the coming of Jesus the fulfillment or the postponement of the promises God made originally to Abraham?

In the third Bible study we will consider who are God's 'chosen' people and the relationship between the Old Testament Church and the New Testament Church.

For further reading, see the articles that complement each of these studies adapted from the book by Stephen Sizer, *Zion's Christian Soldiers* (Downers Grove, IVP).

WITH GOD ON OUR SIDE STUDY GUIDE #3

Israel and the Church: Who are God's Chosen People?

“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.” (Ephesians 2:14-16)

1. Many Christians believe that God blesses people, governments and nations that bless the nation of Israel and curses those who do not. Genesis 12:3 is often quoted but who was this promise made to?

“The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ‘I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.’” (Genesis 12:1-3).

2. The promise is restated by Abraham’s son Isaac to his grandson Jacob in Genesis 27:28-29. Is this personal blessing extended to anyone else?
3. Read Matthew 25:31-46. Dispensationalists claim that in this passage Jesus promises a reward to Christians (sheep) who bless the Jewish people (these brothers of mine). In the following two passages that precede this parable, who does Jesus say are his brothers and sisters?

“And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is known to be my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly be rewarded.” (Matthew 10:42)

““Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” Pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” (Matthew 12:48-50)

4. Some argue that God’s people were identified by physical descent from Abraham. What do these passages teach?

“Do not despise an Edomite, for the Edomites are related to you. Do not despise an Egyptian, because you resided as foreigners in their country. The third generation of children born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.” (Deuteronomy 23:7-8)

“I will record Rahab and Babylon among those who acknowledge me— Philistia too, and Tyre, along with Cush — and will say, ‘This one was born in Zion.’ “Indeed, of Zion it will be said, “This one and that one were born in her, and the Most High himself will establish her.” The LORD will write in the register of the peoples: “This one was born in Zion.” (Psalm 87:4-6)

5. What was the status of non-Jews?

6. How were God’s people to treat the people of the surrounding nations?

7. After the Exile who was entitled to an inheritance of land?

“You are to allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the foreigners residing among you and who have children. You are to consider them as native-born Israelites; along with you they are to be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. In

whatever tribe foreigners reside, there you are to give them their inheritance,” declares the Sovereign LORD.” (Ezekiel 47:22-23)

8. In Isaiah 56, the Lord anticipated the rise of racism among his people, and the fear among those living further away from Jerusalem that they may be excluded. What were the criteria for admittance into the Temple?

“Let no foreigners who have bound themselves to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely exclude me from his people.” ... And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant— these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.” (Isaiah 56:3, 6-7)

9. Why does Jesus have to quote this passage in Matthew 21:12-13?

10. How does John the Baptist respond to those who claimed to be the descendents of Abraham?

John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.’ (Luke 3:7-9)

11. When Jesus praises the faith of a centurion, what does he promise will happen at the heavenly banquet?

“When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matthew 8:10-12)

12. What does Jesus have to say to those who assumed they would be at the banquet?

13. The image of the vine and branches is found consistently in the Bible. Who is described as the ‘vine’ in Psalm 80:14-17 and Hosea 10:1-2?

14. When Jesus insists “I am the true vine” (John 15:1) what is Jesus declaring?

15. What parallels can you observe between Ezekiel 15:1-8 and John 15:1-8? Is Jesus saying anything new? If so, what?

16. What is the criteria for membership of the people of God? (See also John 1:11-13 and Acts 3:24-26)

17. Read Romans 11:17-21. How does Paul analogy of the olive tree complement John 15?

18. How do these passages answer those who claim the Church has 'replaced' Israel?

19. Into what, or whom, have Gentile believers in Jesus been grafted?

20. How does Paul define a Jew in Romans 2?

“A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.” (Romans 2:28-29)

21. How does Paul identify the children of Abraham in Romans 9?

“It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. On the contrary, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” In other words, it is not the natural children who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring.” (Romans 9:6-8)

22. Read Galatians 4:21-31. How does Paul use the analogy of Sarah and Hagar to identify the inheritors of the promises God made to Abraham?

23. From the following passages, who is identified as God's 'chosen people'?

"As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by human beings but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. " (1 Peter 2:4-5 – see also 1 Peter 1:1-2, 2:6-8)

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1 Peter 2:9-10)

"In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:11-12)

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." (Colossians 3:12)

24. How does Hebrews understand the relationship between God's Old Testament saints and New Testament saints?

"These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:39-40)

25. Read Ephesians 2:11-22. Does God have two 'chosen' people or one?

26. What has Jesus broken down through his death? Why is it important therefore that we do not recreate racial barriers among God's people?

In the fourth Bible study we will consider what the Scriptures teach about the inheritance of the Holy Land, its extent and the conditions attached for residency.

For further reading, see the articles that complement each of these studies adapted from the book by Stephen Sizer, *Zion's Christian Soldiers* (Downers Grove, IVP).

WITH GOD ON OUR SIDE STUDY GUIDE #4

The Promised Land: From the Nile to the Euphrates?

“Son of man, the people living in those ruins in the land of Israel are saying, ‘Abraham was only one man, yet he possessed the land. But we are many; surely the land has been given to us as our possession.’ Therefore say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ... You rely on your sword, you do detestable things, and each of you defiles his neighbor’s wife. Should you then possess the land?’ ... I will make the land a desolate waste, and her proud strength will come to an end, and the mountains of Israel will become desolate so that no one will cross them. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have made the land a desolate waste because of all the detestable things they have done.’ (Ezekiel 33:24-29)

1. According to Genesis 15:18-21, what was the geographical extent of the land promised to Abraham?
2. What would the borders of Israel be if this promise were literally fulfilled today? Check out a map of the Middle East or see page 78 of *Zion’s Christian Soldiers*.
3. How was the promise understood as having been fulfilled even by the time of Joshua? (See Joshua 11:23; 21:43-45; 2 Samuel 8:1-15; 1 Kings 4:20-24; 10:1-29; Nehemiah 9:7-9, 25).
4. What are the implications of this for contemporary Zionist claims that the promise has yet to be fulfilled?

5. To whom did the land ultimately belong?

“The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers.” (Leviticus 25:23)

“I brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruit and rich produce. But you came and defiled my land and made my inheritance detestable.” (Jeremiah 2:7)

“I will repay them double for their wickedness and their sin, because they have defiled my land with the lifeless forms of their vile images and have filled my inheritance with their detestable idols.” (Jeremiah 16:18)

6. Was the promise of land unconditional or conditional and why?

“This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words and say, “This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD!” If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever.” (Jeremiah 7:3-7).

See also Zechariah 11:10-13 and Ezekiel 33:23-26.

7. What were some of the conditions attached to residence in God’s land? (See Deuteronomy 19:8-9; 28:1-16; 63-64; Leviticus 18:24-28; Joshua 23:16)

8. Was the land given exclusively to the Jewish people as their personal possession? If not why?

9. How were the original boundaries of the promised land later reduced in Deuteronomy 2:1-5, 9 & 19? This includes the territory south of Beersheva and East of the Jordan river.

10. What became the status of the 30 towns in Galilee which Solomon gave to Hiram ?

11. What implications would these passages have if 'biblical' borders were applied to Israel today?

12. How did Jesus respond to the territorial aspirations of his disciples in Acts 1?

“So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:6-8)

13. How does Jesus explain the timing, nature and extent of his kingdom?

14. What should they have already understood from Jesus' previous teaching concerning his kingdom?

“Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.” (John 6:15)

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place." (John 18:36)

15. To whom was the Abrahamic inheritance ultimately promised? (See Matthew 5:5; Acts 3:24-25; 20:32; Galatians 3:28-29; 1 Peter 1:4)

16. How does the New Testament understand the promise of an inheritance has or is being fulfilled?

"By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God... These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them... These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect." (Hebrews 11:8-10; 14-16; 39-40)

17. What then is the inheritance of the saints?

In the fifth Bible study we will consider the significance of Jerusalem in biblical history and God's purposes today.

For further reading, see the articles that complement each of these studies adapted from the book by Stephen Sizer, *Zion's Christian Soldiers* (Downers Grove, IVP).

WITH GOD ON OUR SIDE STUDY GUIDE #5

Jerusalem: The Eternal Capital of the Jews?

“But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.” (Hebrews 12:22-23)

1. What was the significance of Jerusalem in the Old Testament?
(see Genesis 14:18; 22:2; Psalm 2:1-6; 76:2; Isaiah 1:21; 29:1-4; 54:11-17)
2. How does Psalm 87 present Jerusalem as an inclusive city of faith?
3. What conditions did God attach to residency there? (Jeremiah 7:1-11)
4. What was Micah’s message to the people of Jerusalem?

“Hear this, you leaders of the house of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel, who despise justice and distort all that is right; who build Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with wickedness. Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. Yet they lean upon the LORD and say, “Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us.” Therefore because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets.” (Micah 3:9-12)
5. What might a contemporary prophet like Micah say to Jerusalem today?

6. Zechariah 14 describes a time of great suffering for Jerusalem. What clues in the passage suggest that this has been fulfilled?

7. What does this phrase 'Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled' found in Luke 21:24? Read the context in Luke 21:5-28 and also Isaiah 63:3-6.

8. What internal evidence would suggest Jesus intended the message for his disciples?

9. How long would Jerusalem be trampled on by the Gentiles? (Revelation 11:2)

10. Why does Paul associate Jerusalem with Hagar in Galatians 4:21-31?

11. Paul quotes from Genesis 21:10 and Isaiah 54:1 to reinforce his argument in Galatians 4. Why is this?

12. Why does John associate Jerusalem with Sodom in Revelation?

"Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified." (Revelation 11:8)

13. How is citizenship of Jerusalem invested with new meaning through Jesus Christ?

“You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: “If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death.” The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with fear.” But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.” (Hebrews 12:18-23)

14. How is the ‘new Jerusalem’ described?

“I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children... Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” (Revelation 3:12; 21:2-7, 27)

15. Who will the residents be?

- 16.** How does this image of Jerusalem found in Scripture refute contemporary depictions of the city as the eternal, exclusive and undivided capital of the Jewish people.

In the sixth Bible study we will consider the significance of the Temple in biblical history and its role in God's purposes today.

For further reading, see the articles that complement each of these studies adapted from the book by Stephen Sizer, *Zion's Christian Soldiers* (Downers Grove, IVP).

WITH GOD ON OUR SIDE STUDY GUIDE #6

The Temple: Ready to Rebuild?

“But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.” (Hebrews 12:22-23)

1. What was the purpose of the Tabernacle?

“The LORD said to Moses “Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from everyone whose heart prompts them to give... “Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.” (Exodus 25:1-2, 8. See also Hebrews 9).

2. Why was the Temple built?

“Go and tell my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?” ’ (2 Samuel 7:5-7)

3. Daniel predicted the destruction of the Temple. When was this prophecy fulfilled?

“Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.” (Daniel 9:25-27)

4. Who is the ‘Anointed One’ Daniel refers to?

5. Is there anything in the text that indicates a 2000 year gap or parenthesis was intended between verse 26 and 27?

6. What is the relationship between Jesus and the Temple?

“Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” But the temple he had spoken of was his body.” (John 2:19-21)

“Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being. Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed by the law.

They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.” But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.” (Hebrews 8:1-6)

“Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary... The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order. But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation... Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.” (Hebrews 9:1, 8-11; 13:15)

7. What were the limitations of the earthly Temple?

8. Hebrews 10 insists the Temple was only intended to be a temporary structure. Why is this?

“The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty

for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins...

First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them"—though they were offered in accordance with the law. Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God." (Hebrews 10:1-4, 8-12)

9. How was the Temple made redundant the moment Jesus Christ died on the cross?

10. What further insight into the temporary nature of the Temple did Jesus provide in the conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4:21-24?

11. Like Daniel, Jesus prophesied the destruction of the Temple in Matthew 24. Is there anything in the text to indicate Jesus expected another Temple needed to be rebuilt 2000 years later?

"Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." ... "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let

the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. “ (Matthew 24:1-2, 15-16)

12. How is the Temple invested with new meaning in the New Testament? (See 1 Corinthians 3:10-17 and 2 Corinthians 6:16-17)

13. Why does Paul quote from passages describing the Tabernacle and Temple to describe the Church? (See Leviticus 26:12; Jeremiah 32:38; Ezekiel 37:27)

14. In what ways is the true Temple under construction?

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”
(Ephesians 2:19-22)

15. Why is an earthly Temple no longer required?

16. How would any future Temple built in Jerusalem undermine the finished work of Christ?

In the final Bible study we will consider what the Scriptures teach about the future and our role in it.

For further reading, see the articles that complement each of these studies adapted from the book by Stephen Sizer, *Zion's Christian Soldiers* (Downers Grove, IVP)

WITH GOD ON OUR SIDE STUDY GUIDE #7

The Future: Anxious for Armageddon?

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” (Revelation 22:1-2)

1. Many Christians believe Jesus will return secretly and rapture believers to heaven just before, or during, a time of great tribulation on earth. What Bible passages or Christian authors have shaped your view of the future?
2. In John 15 Jesus uses the image of the vine and the branches to emphasize that we must remain in him to bear fruit. Who does Jesus warn will be ‘cut off’ (15:2) and ‘thrown away’ (15:6)?
3. In Matthew 13, Jesus tells a parable about wheat and weeds growing together to explain what will happen in the future. Which is ‘taken’ first, the wheat or the weeds?
4. In Matthew 24, Jesus compares his return with the days of Noah’s flood. What does he emphasize at the beginning and end of this illustration?

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking,

marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come." (Matthew 24:36-42)

5. In the days of Noah, which people were taken away by the flood?
6. What does Jesus mean when he says, "That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man."? What comparison is he making?
7. Which of the two men in the field and two women in the house does Jesus therefore want us to understand will be 'taken' away?
8. Taking the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 13 and Matthew 24 together which class of people are 'taken' and which is 'left'? Believers or unbelievers?
9. What does Jesus teach explicitly about his return in Matthew 24?

"At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you ahead of time. "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the wilderness,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of

Man... “At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the peoples of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.” (Matthew 24:23-27, 30-31)

10. How does Jesus refute the claim that he will return secretly for believers?

11. 1 Thessalonians 4 is often used to teach a ‘secret rapture’. How does the passage actually reinforce what Jesus has taught in Matthew 24?

“According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)

12. What will be the unmistakable audible and visible signs of Christ’s return?

13. How do these Bible passages speak to ‘Rapture’ theology and the popular views shaped by the ‘Left Behind’ books and films?

14. Why did Jesus give us 'signs' of his return? (Luke 21:20-28)

15. What does the Bible teach about Armageddon? (Revelation 16:13-21). Given the emphasis in contemporary popular theology, what is the significance of there being only one reference to in the whole Bible?

16. Who is the conflict actually between (and not between)?

 "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."
 (Ephesians 6:11-13)

17. When some Christian leaders are lobbying for greater military intervention in the Middle East, what strategy does the Bible instruct Christians to follow? (Matthew 5:38-48; Ephesians 6:14-18; Romans 13:1-7)

18. Christians have traditionally interpreted Revelation 20:1-10 and the reference to a thousand years in different ways. Is this to be understood as a literal or symbolic period? Which interpretation do you find most convincing and why?

19. Jesus repeatedly said, "I am coming soon." That was 2,000 years ago. What did he mean? (Revelation 2:16; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20).

20. How should we live in the light of the imminent return of Jesus?

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. " (Matthew 24:42-46)

21. How can we 'speed' to Lord's return?

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming." (2 Peter 3:10-12)

22. What is the ultimate vision of the future in the Bible? How should this shape our convictions and priorities?

"Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem,

coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Revelation 21:1-4. See also 21:22-27)

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.” (Revelation 22:1-5)

This was the seventh and final study in this series on Israel and the Church. For further reading, see the articles that complement each of these studies adapted from the book by Stephen Sizer, *Zion’s Christian Soldiers* (Downers Grove, IVP).

Recommended Resources for further study

Books

“Zion’s Christian Soliders?” by Stephen Sizer

“Christian Zionism: Road Map to Amrmeddodn?” by Stephen Sizer

“Whose Land, Whose Promise?” by Gary M. Burge

“Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to “Holy Land” Theology” by Gary M. Burge

“Whose Promised Land?” by Colin Chapman

“Light Force” by Brother Andrew & Al Janssen

For a full list of resources, please visit: <http://www.withgodonourside.com>