

PART TWO

JOSHUA - ESTHER

# THE WHOLE Story<sup>+</sup>

KINGS,  
KINGDOMS,  
& THE PROMISED LAND



# THE WHOLE Story+

## The Bible in a Year

Upstate Church, welcome to our journey through the Word of God. Our goal is simple. We want to encourage as many people in our church as possible to read through the entire Bible in a year. We want to encourage people to engage with the Bible because, as a church, we believe that no other Christian discipline has the potential to impact our spiritual walk, like daily Bible reading.

## The Reading Plan

This resource is one of the multiple guides that will be available to you throughout the year. Each resource will include weekly sermon introductions for the Sunday morning service at Upstate Church. Between each sermon introduction, there will be a week's worth of daily readings.

The daily readings are dated, include selections from the Old and New Testaments, and are for each weekday. This format will take you through the whole Bible in a year, with readings five days per week and two days open for catching up or getting ahead.

## The Format

We not only want to encourage you to read the Bible, we want to teach you how to read the Bible. To help Upstate Church members learn to read the Bible, we use the HEAR Journal method in each of the daily readings. Each day, you will see the HEAR acrostic going down the page. The HEAR journal guides your reading and helps you interact with the text.

H - H stands for HIGHLIGHT. As you read through the text, note or highlight something that stands out to you. Don't just read the Word. Interact with it. Ask questions about it. Highlight what stands out. Highlighting is about determining what the Bible says.

E - E stands for explain. In your own words, seek to explain what you highlighted. It may take some investigation if the passage is a little ambiguous. You may need to look at the notes in your study Bible or consult a good commentary if you need to clarify something. Most of the time, you will know precisely what the highlight means, but explaining it in your own words helps you internalize God's message. Explanation is about determining what the Bible means.

A - A stands for apply. After interacting with the Word and understanding it, you need to determine how it applies to your life. Reading the Bible is about more than gaining information. Reading the Bible is about transformation, which comes from beholding the Lord and hearing from Him. Application is about determining what the Bible means for me.

R - R stands for respond. Encountering God in the Bible does not stop when we determine what the Bible says, what the Bible means, or what the Bible means to me. We have not encountered God through the Word until we respond to God accordingly. We respond to God in prayer according to what He reveals to us in the Word. We respond to God in prayer with praise for who He is, confess where we have failed, and repent as we return to God!

## The Challenge

We go to the Bible to hear from God. The challenge before our church this year is to learn to go to the Bible to hear from God again and again. Will you embrace this challenge in 2025? Will you read the Bible with us? Will you go to the Word again and again? Will you do all you can to hear from God this year? We cannot wait to see how God works as we run toward His Word.

March 16, 2025

Joshua 6:1-25

# THE WHOLE Story+

“Are we there yet?” Every parent knows the painful repetition of this question being asked on a long road trip with children. At this point, Joshua probably knows the same pain. Joshua came out of Egypt with the people of Israel. Joshua had been a spy sent into Canaan to scope out the land. Then, Joshua witnessed the people rebel against God, and he had been subjected to wandering in the wilderness with the rebels for the past forty years. All of that was changing, though. Now, the people of God had finally arrived at the place that God had promised them. The people had crossed over the Jordan River, and they were going to take what was theirs.

That was the plan anyway, until they came to Jericho. Jericho was a great city in the Ancient Near East. It had the reputation of being impenetrable and the capacity to survive any siege. In short, Jericho was unconquerable to the army that had come to conquer it. It's safe to say that as the people of Israel approached Jericho, they had no idea what they would do.

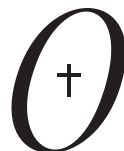
Over and over again in the Bible, when the people of God see no way forward, God shows up to reveal that his plan was never in doubt. What happens next is almost unbelievable. The siege of Jericho involves mighty warriors, mighty musicians, odd battle plans, and unexpected heroes who point us in the direction of the true hero to come. The Battle of Jericho introduces another “scarlet thread” that reminds us Jesus is here, even as the walls come tumbling down.

How Does God Win The Victory?

An Unlikely Strategy

An Unlikely People

An Unlikely Reward



March 17, 2025

Read: Numbers 34-36; Luke 4

H

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March 18, 2025

Read: Deuteronomy 1-3; Psalm 36; Luke 5

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March 19, 2025

Read: Deuteronomy 4-5; Luke 6

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March 20, 2025

Read: Deuteronomy 6-9; Luke 7

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March 21, 2025  
Read: Deuteronomy 10-14; Psalm 5; Luke 8

WEEK 13

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THE WHOLE  
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March 23, 2025

Ruth 1-4

There are many pitfalls along the path of reading the Bible in a year. There are obstacles you have to overcome, distractions you have to put aside, and challenging texts you have to get through if you are going to accomplish your goal of making it through the entirety of scripture in just 12 months. One of the most significant challenges in reading through all scripture is all the genealogies. You know what genealogies are; they are the long lists of family trees. This person begot that person, and that person begot this person, on and on they go.

One of the most important genealogies in the Bible is the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1:1-17. This genealogy serves as the Messiah's family tree. If you go and read through that genealogy, you will find something odd, something that seems like it may not belong. You will find the names of three women in a long list of what is otherwise just the names of men. One of the women listed in this genealogy is the subject of today's sermon, Ruth.

The book of Ruth is the story of tragic loss, unimaginable grace, and God's ability to redeem even the most broken of circumstances. Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, find themselves in a horribly broken and hopeless situation as both of their husbands are dead, they are separated from the people of God, and they have no prospects of financial provision. Yet, even in their most hopeless moments, God orchestrated a redeemer who would meet their every need. Not only that, God would go on to provide what they needed most: redemption in despair. This kinsman redeemer would be the great-grandfather (a few dozen times removed) of another great redeemer, Jesus Christ. Jesus is here, even as His family tree unfolds in the book of Ruth.

### Three Lenses of Redemption:

Bitterness to Joy

Brokenness to Restoration

Hopelessness to Salvation

March 24, 2025

Read: Deuteronomy 15-18; Psalm 115; Luke 9

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## March 25, 2025

Read: Deuteronomy 19-22; Psalm 6; Luke 10

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## March 26, 2025

Read: Deuteronomy 23-26; Luke 11

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## March 27, 2025

Read: Deuteronomy 27-31; Luke 12

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## March 28, 2025

Read: Deuteronomy 32-34; Psalm 13; Luke 13

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March 30, 2025

1 Samuel 1-3

# THE WHOLE Story+

1 Samuel 1-3 unfolds during a time of spiritual decline in Israel. We are introduced to Samuel during the time period of the “Judges.” This was a time marked by disobedience toward God. The priesthood, which was supposed to help people know God, had abdicated its responsibilities. God’s word was rare, and visions were infrequent. This was a time of spiritual barrenness. Despite this dark backdrop, the chapter reveals God’s faithfulness; God is working even if we can’t see it.

Samuel, a young boy serving under Eli in the temple, is the central figure in this chapter. Though Samuel is inexperienced and unaware of God’s voice, his heart is open and willing to serve. This contrasts sharply with Eli’s declining spiritual sensitivity and his sons’ blatant disregard for God’s law. God chooses to bypass the established but failing leadership, calling Samuel to be His prophet and a guiding light in this spiritually dim era.

The most striking part of this story is God’s insistence on speaking with Samuel! Initially, Samuel mistakes God’s voice for Eli’s. Yet God calls repeatedly, showing His patient determination to raise up a faithful servant. Once Eli perceives what is happening, he instructs Samuel to respond, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” This simple yet profound response sets the tone for Samuel’s life, marked by obedience and openness to God’s word.

1 Samuel 3 reminds readers that God is never absent, even in times of spiritual decay. He works through humble and willing hearts, bringing hope and renewal. Samuel’s calling shows how, though rare, God’s word can break into the darkest seasons, illuminating the way forward for His people. The word of God coming to Samuel in dark times points us to another time when the Word of God came to a people in darkness. This story points us to when Jesus Christ, the Word of God, came to a people who lived in darkness. Jesus is here, even as Samuel hears the Word of God.

## A Faithful Servant:

Listens

Obeys

Grows



March 31, 2025

Read: Joshua 1-4; Psalm 143; Luke 14

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April 1, 2025

Read: Joshua 5-8; Psalm 14; Luke 15

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April 2, 2025

Read: Joshua 9-13; Luke 16

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April 3, 2025

Read: Joshua 14-17; Luke 17

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April 4, 2025  
Read: Joshua 18-21; Psalm 15; Luke 18

WEEK 15

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THE WHOLE  
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April 6, 2025

1 Samuel 16-17

Today, we come to one of the most iconic narratives in Scripture, a true story that speaks to God's sovereignty, the power of a savior to act on behalf of His people, and God's ability to use the unexpected for His glory. These chapters introduce us to David, the young shepherd who would become Israel's greatest king, and set the stage for his dramatic confrontation with Goliath, the giant champion of the Philistines.

In 1 Samuel 16, we witness the Lord's rejection of Saul as king and the divine anointing of David. The prophet Samuel is sent to Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons. Surprisingly, God chooses not the eldest or the most impressive-looking of Jesse's sons but David, the youngest, who is out tending the sheep. This moment reminds us of God's words to Samuel: "The Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). God's choice of David as king is in keeping with His pattern of choosing unlikely individuals to fulfill His purposes. Like Abraham, the man who was too old to be used, like Moses, the man who couldn't speak well, we are introduced to David, an unlikely candidate to do great things for the glory of God.

In chapter 17, the narrative shifts dramatically to the battlefield. The Philistines challenge Israel with their formidable warrior, Goliath, whose size and arrogance intimidate the entire Israelite army. Yet, it is David, still a boy, armed with nothing but faith, a sling, and five smooth stones, who steps forward to confront the giant. His victory over Goliath not only delivers Israel but also highlights a profound spiritual truth: God always acts for the deliverance and salvation of His people, and sometimes He does so in the most unlikely ways.

As we delve into these passages, we are invited to reflect on God's willingness to save His people. The victory of David points us to another win in the Bible, the triumph of Jesus. Like David, Jesus came from humble beginnings. Like David, Jesus was not impressive in the world's eyes. Like David, Jesus stepped up to fight the enemies that oppressed the people of God. Like David, Jesus did what we could not do for ourselves. Jesus is here, even as David takes on Goliath.

David Stood Against Goliath

God Slayed the Giant

April 7, 2025

Read: Joshua 22-24; Psalm 116; Luke 19

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April 8, 2025

Read: Judges 1-3; Psalm 16; Luke 20

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April 9, 2025

Read: Judges 4-6; Luke 21

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April 10, 2025  
Read: Judges 7-8; Luke 22

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April 11, 2025  
Read: Judges 9-11; Psalm 17; Luke 23

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April 13, 2025

2 Samuel 11-12

# THE WHOLE Story

Today, we approach a sobering and pivotal passage in David's life, one that reveals the devastating consequences of sin and God's profound mercy. In 2 Samuel 11-12, we witness the moral failure of a man after God's own heart and the redemptive power of divine grace. These chapters remind us that no one, not even Israel's greatest king, is immune to sin's allure—and that God's mercy is greater than our worst failures.

First comes David's fall in chapter 11. At a time when kings went out to battle, David remained in Jerusalem, and in his idleness, he saw Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, bathing. Succumbing to lust, he abuses his authority to take her for himself, committing adultery. When Bathsheba becomes pregnant, David seeks to cover his sin by orchestrating Uriah's death in battle. The chapter closes with a haunting indictment: "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (2 Samuel 11:27). This is a stark reminder that sin, no matter how hidden or justified in human eyes, is always seen by God.

In chapter 12, the Lord sends the prophet Nathan to confront David. Nathan exposes David's sin through a parable about a rich man who steals a poor man's only lamb. Stricken with conviction, David responds with humility, confessing, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:13). God, in His mercy, forgives David, but the consequences of his actions remain, bringing turmoil to his household and kingdom. Yet even in judgment, God's grace shines through, as David and Bathsheba's second son, Solomon, is later chosen to continue the covenant line, pointing us to Christ.

As we explore these chapters, we see the weight of sin and the hope of repentance. David's story reminds us that sin always leads to destruction, but God's grace is sufficient to restore the broken. Ultimately, this account directs our eyes to Jesus, the greater Son of David, who came to bear the penalty of sin on our behalf. Where David failed, Jesus succeeded, securing eternal forgiveness and restoration for all who repent and trust in Him. Let us see in David's story both a warning and a promise: sin brings death, but God's mercy brings life. Jesus is here, even in David's failure.

The Progression of Sin

The Redemption of Sin

The Cost of Sin



April 14, 2025

Read: Judges 12-16; Psalm 146; Luke 24

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April 15, 2025

Read: Judges 17-18; Psalm 21; Acts 1

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April 16, 2025

Read: Judges 19-21; Acts 2

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April 17, 2025

Read: Ruth 1-2; Acts 3

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April 18, 2025  
Read: Ruth 3-4; Psalm 37; Acts 4

WEEK 17

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THE WHOLE  
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April 20, 2025

1 Kings 2

On our Journey through the Bible, we find ourselves in an unexpected scripture passage on Easter Sunday. In 1 Kings 2, we see King David at the end of his earthly life, passing the royal mantle to his son Solomon. As the aged king nears death, he delivers his final instructions, urging Solomon to be strong, to walk faithfully in God's ways, and to uphold the covenantal standards set before him. This chapter will quickly see Solomon being called upon to establish his throne by dealing decisively with those threatening the kingdom's stability. Adonijah's ambition, Joab's treachery, and Shimei's insolence all come into focus as we witness the new king's rise to power. Soon, Solomon sits securely as king of Israel, the kingdom seemingly purified of all impurity.

Yet, even at this moment of apparent strength and hope, we cannot help but sense the limitations of Israel's earthly monarchy. David, the greatest king Israel had ever known, dies. Although wise and blessed, Solomon will later fail to maintain perfect faithfulness to the Lord. The purgings of 1 Kings 2 may rid the kingdom of immediate threats, but they cannot root out the deeper menace—sin—that continues to plague the human heart. No matter how promising or devout a king may begin, death awaits him, and corruption awaits the human institutions he leads.

This brings us powerfully to Easter's great truth. Today, we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the King of kings, who has conquered not just a political enemy or a rebellious official but death itself. Where David and Solomon were mortal and flawed, Jesus is eternal and holy. Where earthly kings could establish peace for a season, Jesus established a kingdom of everlasting peace and righteousness. His empty tomb signals the arrival of a King who cannot be overcome by death and does not need to purge His kingdom through violence. Instead, He has purged the sin of His people by bearing it Himself on the cross. We may be in an unexpected text this Easter Sunday, but Jesus is here even on David's deathbed.

We Need a New King

Jesus is the King We Need

April 21, 2025

Read: 1 Samuel 1-2; Psalm 120; Acts 5

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April 22, 2025

Read: 1 Samuel 3-5; Psalm 23; Acts 6

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April 23, 2025

Read: 1 Samuel 6-8; Acts 7

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# April 24, 2025

Read: 1 Samuel 9-10; Acts 8

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# April 25, 2025

Read: 1 Samuel 11-13; Psalm 38; Acts 9

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April 27, 2025

1 Kings 18

# THE WHOLE Story+

On our journey through the Scriptures, 1 Kings 18 brings us to a dramatic and decisive confrontation on Mount Carmel. Here, the prophet Elijah stands alone against the assembled prophets of Baal. Israel's hearts have drifted away from the Lord, lured by the empty promises of a false god. Desperate to restore true worship, Elijah issues a bold challenge: let him and the prophets of Baal prepare sacrifices but let the true God answer by fire. Baal's prophets cry to their powerless deity, cutting themselves and dancing in vain. At last, Elijah steps forward and prays a simple prayer and the Lord's fire falls from heaven, consuming not only the sacrifice but the stones, the dust, and even the water poured around the altar. In that fiery moment, the Lord reveals His unmatched sovereignty, calling the people to forsake their idols and acknowledge Him as the one true God.

Yet even this mighty demonstration points us beyond Elijah's day to an even greater manifestation of God's power and grace. Israel's waywardness echoes our own, and the futility of Baal's prophets mirrors the dead-end worship of earthly idols that cannot save. But God, in His mercy, would send another Prophet greater than Elijah—Jesus Christ—who would stand against the spiritual forces of darkness and prevail by His death and resurrection. At the cross, Christ displayed the reality and supremacy of God's love and righteousness and consumed the penalty our sins deserved, clearing away every barrier between us and our Maker. As we contemplate Elijah's triumph on Mount Carmel, we are reminded that true redemption and renewed worship come only through the God who reveals Himself in power and truth, ultimately fulfilled in the saving work of Jesus, our risen Lord. Jesus is here, even on Mount Carmel.

Why Should You Worship God?

His Worth

His Power

His Sovereignty

His Victory





April 28, 2025

Read: 1 Samuel 14; Psalm 124; Acts 10

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April 29, 2025

Read: 1 Samuel 15-16; 1 Chronicles 1; Psalm 39; Acts 11

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April 30, 2025

Read: 1 Samuel 17; 1 Chronicles 2; Acts 12

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May 1, 2025

Read: 1 Samuel 18-19; 1 Chronicles 3; Psalm 59; Acts 13

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May 2, 2025

Read: 1 Samuel 20; 1 Chronicles 4; Psalm 56, 57, 142; Acts 14

WEEK 19

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THE WHOLE  
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May 4, 2025

2 Chronicles 36

2 Chronicles brings us to a sobering conclusion to the era of the Davidic kings. Chapter 36 shows Judah's final slide into rebellion as one king after another turns away from the Lord's covenant. Despite generations of warnings through the prophets, the people harden their hearts and refuse to repent. The result is catastrophic: the armies of Babylon tear down Jerusalem's walls, destroy the Temple, and carry the people into exile. All the promises and hopes once bound up in the Davidic throne now appear lost, scattered in the dust of a ruined city.

These dark pages may tempt us to believe that God has abandoned his people. Yet, the Lord's steadfast commitment to His covenant people shines through. After seventy years of exile, He moves the heart of a foreign king—Cyrus of Persia—to issue a decree allowing the exiles to return home and rebuild God's house. We see God's plan unfolding through unexpected means within these bleak events. The sin of Judah's kings and the brokenness of God's people only heighten our longing for the true and perfect King, who will never fail.

Here, we are reminded that earthly kings and kingdoms, even those begun by God's hand, can never fully achieve what only the divine Son of David can accomplish. The tragedy of 2 Chronicles 36 points to the day God Himself would come in the flesh. The covenant is upheld and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the perfect King of kings. Where the sons of David fell short, Christ remains faithful. Where human power crumbles into captivity, Christ rises in glorious freedom through His death and resurrection. In the gloom of exile and judgment, God sets the stage for a future far greater than any earthly throne could offer. In Christ alone, the true Temple is raised, a kingdom without end is established, and the hope of a restored creation finds its final answer. Jesus is here, even as the people are led away into captivity.

The Progression of Sin

The Redemption of Sin

The Cost of Sin

May 5, 2025

Read: 1 Samuel 21-22; 1 Chronicles 5; Psalm 52; Acts 15

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## May 6, 2025

Read: 1 Samuel 23-24; 1 Chronicles 6; Psalm 54; Acts 16

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## May 7, 2025

Read: 1 Samuel 25; 1 Chronicles 7; Acts 17

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May 8, 2025

Read: 1 Samuel 26-27; 1 Chronicles 8; Acts 18

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May 9, 2025

Read: 1 Samuel 28-29; 1 Chronicles 9; Acts 19

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May 11, 2025

Esther 1-4

# THE WHOLE Story+

Esther brings us to a narrative where God's name is never explicitly mentioned. However, His sovereign hand is unmistakably present at every turn. This remarkable story unfolds against the backdrop of Persian power, where Jewish people, scattered and vulnerable, face the threat of annihilation. Through the unexpected rise of Esther, an orphaned Jewish girl who becomes queen, and the wise counsel of her cousin Mordecai, God preserves His covenant people. Esther's courageous decision to risk her life by approaching the king on behalf of her people leads to a dramatic reversal: Haman, the enemy of the Jews, is exposed, and the people who were destined for destruction are rescued instead.

This book shows a God who works subtly, orchestrating events and personalities to fulfill His purposes. He uses unlikely individuals and hidden circumstances to bring about deliverance, showing that no edict from a human throne can thwart His redemptive plan. Esther's bravery and Mordecai's faithfulness are models of trust in the unseen God, who remains faithful to His promises, even in a foreign land far removed from the Temple and its sacrifices.

This narrative points us forward to the far greater deliverance accomplished by Jesus Christ. Just as Esther's courageous intervention saved her people from destruction, Jesus interceded for us at the cost of His own life—rescuing us not merely from earthly threats but from sin and eternal judgment. Where the kingdom of Persia offered temporal decrees that rose and fell with each passing king, Christ's kingdom is everlasting. The salvation accomplished through Esther invites us to see a grander story in which the unexpected Lamb of God triumphs over sin and death. From Esther to Jesus, we see a pattern: God's sovereign, sometimes hidden hand directing the affairs of human history to bring about the ultimate rescue of His people, shining the light of eternal hope into the darkest circumstances. Jesus is here, even in a book that never mentions His name.

The Progression of Sin

The Redemption of Sin

The Cost of Sin



## May 12, 2025

Read: 1 Samuel 30-31; 1 Chronicles 10; Acts 20

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## May 13, 2025

Read: 2 Samuel 1-2; 1 Chronicles 11; Psalm 96, 106; Acts 21

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## May 14, 2025

Read: 2 Samuel 3-5; 1 Chronicles 12; Psalm 122; Acts 22

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## May 15, 2025

Read: 2 Samuel 6; 1 Chronicles 13; Psalm 60; Acts 23

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May 16, 2025  
Read: 1 Chronicles 14-16; Acts 24

May 16, 2025  
Read: 1 Chronicles 14-16; Acts 24

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