

THE PROMISES OF GOD

by Jackson Wu
Theologian in Residence
Mission ONE

Who can we trust?



DO YOU WANT SOME GOOD NEWS

There is so much bad news in the world. It would be nice to hear some good news. After all, wherever we look, it seems that we find another family having problems, countries at war, and someone else suffering from some sickness.

People feel afraid and isolated. They don't know whom to trust. Even their closest friends and family break their promises.

The world is divided.

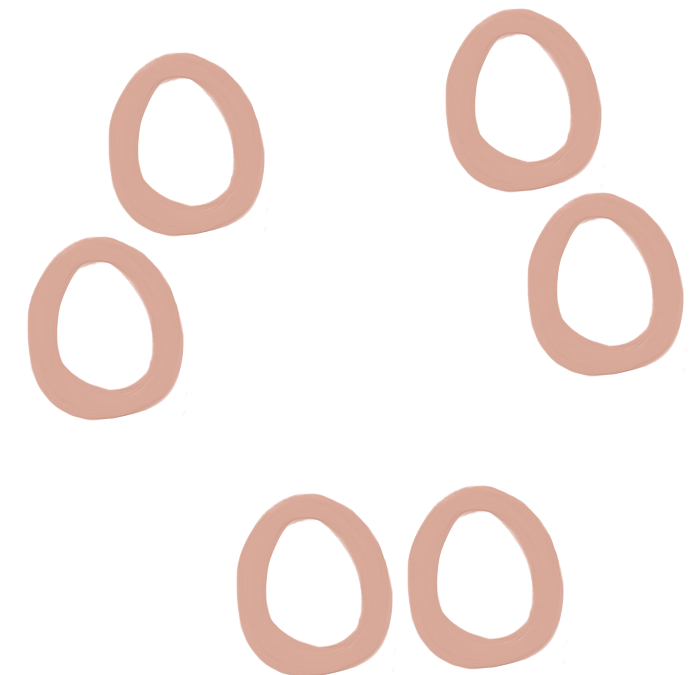
The Bible helps us understand why there is so much evil and suffering in the world. More importantly, it gives us a reason to hope for better days to come.

In the beginning, the Creator God made the world to be his one human family. There was harmony. He loved his creation.

God designed the world to be a holy Kingdom. His people are supposed to bring honor to God, their Father-King. By ruling the world as his children, they would reflect the glory of God. This was their mission.

What went wrong?

HARMONY



Our ancestors dishonored our heavenly Father. This is called “sin.” God’s children preferred autonomy to dependence and relationships. In effect, humans betrayed the Creator King by taking over God’s world.

It has always been this way. Nowadays, if you ask, “What do you believe in?”, many people say, “I believe in myself.”

Because people did not remain loyal to their Father and King, the human family became divided. They felt fear, jealousy, and alienation. People blamed one another and even began to compete for honor.

FEAR

Throughout history, divorce and war have plagued families and nations. People have tried to find security, peace, and happiness in various ways. For example, we tend to set up factions, often based on ethnicity, gender, and education among other things.

Yet, this kind of social unity is superficial. True harmony only comes when we have relationship with our Heavenly Father and thus the entire human family.

God allowed the world to fall under a curse; humans became slaves to sin and death. The curse of sin reigns wherever God’s human family does not honor him above themselves.



KEY QUESTIONS

1. How have you seen the world divided? How have people behaved shamefully or dishonorable?
2. As a Father, God deserves honor. Why does dishonoring our Father divide the human family?
3. Why does loyalty honor God?
4. What do people deserve for bringing shame upon God's name and his family?

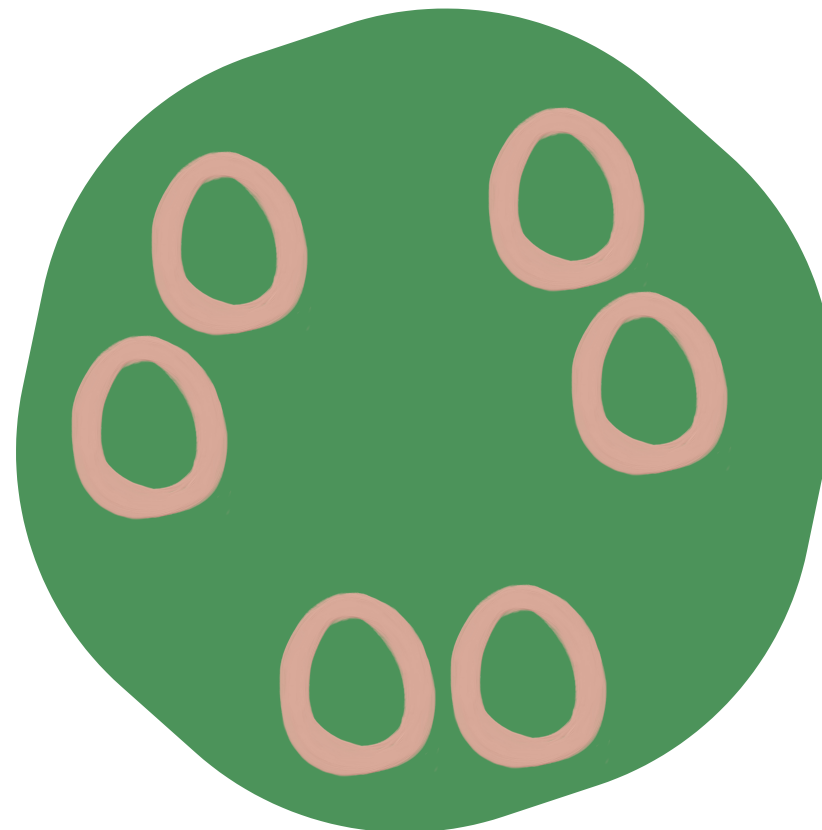
God is a good king and father. He will not allow his creation to suffer corruption forever. However, God already had a rescue plan.

Many years ago, God made covenant with a man named “Abram.” He promised to change the world forever through Abram’s family. Instead of a curse, all the nations would be blessed!! He would save humanity from our shame.

Although Abraham and his wife were very old and had no children, this does not stop the Creator God, who brings life out of nothing. Abraham believed that God would fulfill his promises. He gave his allegiance to the one true God, not idols.

The Creator King would give a great name to Abram. In fact, God gave Abram a new name saying, “No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations” (Genesis 17:5). His honor did not depend on his ancestors and wealth.

PROMISE





KEY QUESTIONS

1. What did God promise Abraham?
2. How does God give honor to Abraham?
3. How does Abraham's faith glorify God?
4. What does your honor ("face") depend on? How might God remove human shame?

Centuries later, Abraham's family had grown to a sizable nation, called "Israel." However, things were not what we would expect. Due to famine, they had to flee to a neighboring country, Egypt, who eventually enslaved them for many years. It seemed that God was silent.

What about God's promises?

Once again, God revealed himself in a special way to his people. He rescued them by defeating the oppressive king and his gods. He had not forgotten his promises to Abraham. In fact, he reaffirmed his commitment by making a covenant through a man named Moses. God indeed would use Israel to show that he alone is the one true God and King over all the earth.

How did he do this?

Israel was supposed to set God apart as holy, worthy of unique honor. If they did this, God promised to dwell among them. If they would give **allegiance** to him, God said "you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6).

He protected them from their enemies and provided for their needs. He also established righteous laws that expressed his holiness and compassion. They even built a Temple, which symbolized his presence among them.

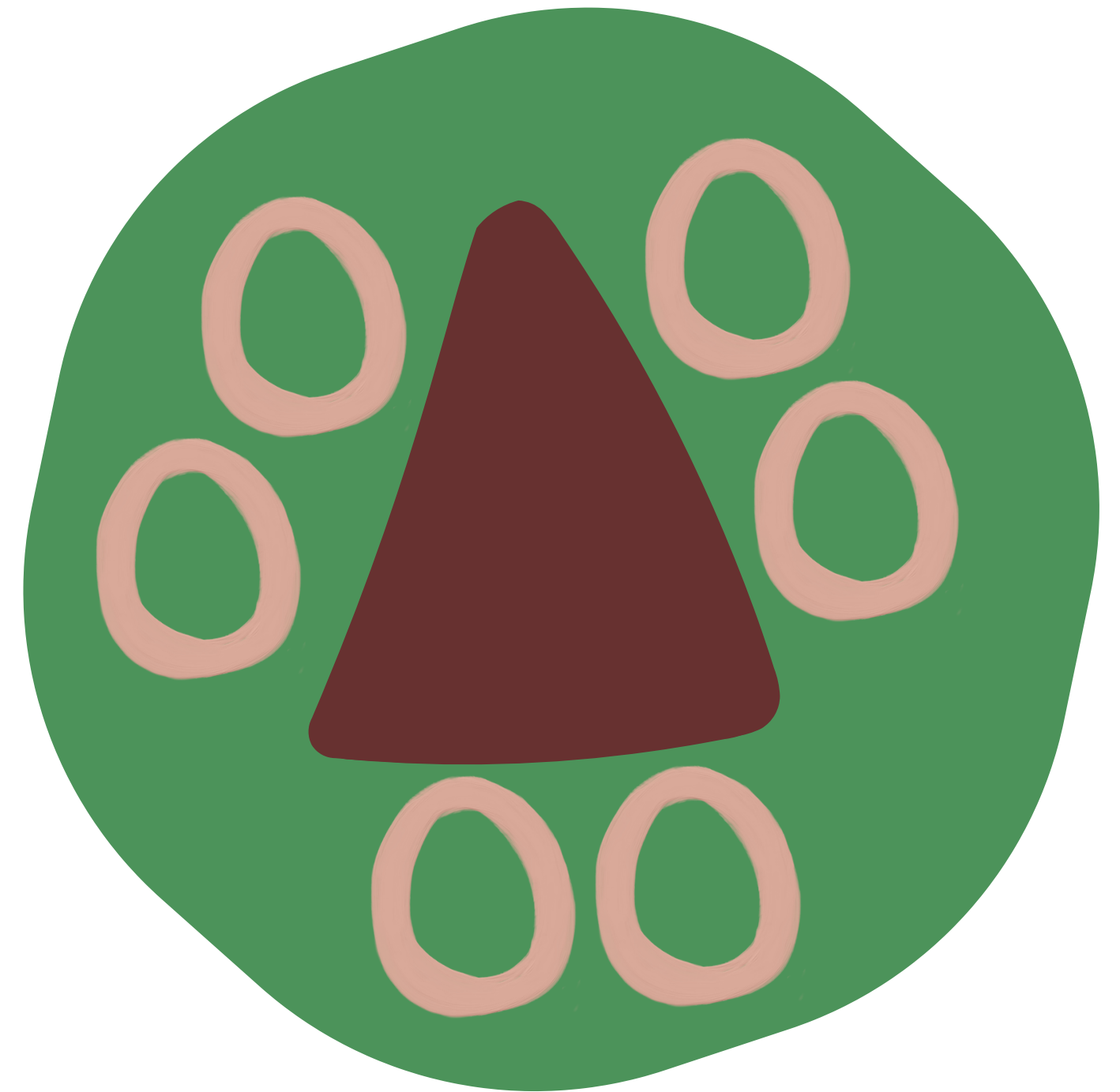
Naturally, the people of Israel were called to be pure and holy. God wanted them to love him with all of their heart, mind, and strength.

SHAME

Unfortunately, despite Israel's many blessings, they still lacked something – clean hearts. God's wonderful law had given them their cultural traditions and ceremonies, yet these are powerless to change **hardened** hearts. They sacrificed animals to God, but they would not sacrifice their pride. In short, Israel was not faithful to the covenant God.

The Mosaic covenant also gave many warnings. God promised them judgment if they were not loyal to him.

How would God both judge Israel and yet fulfill his promise to make them a blessing to all nations?





KEY QUESTIONS

1. Why did it first seem that God did not keep his promises?
2. How did God bless Abraham's family?
3. What was Israel's calling and mission?
4. What did the Temple symbolize?
5. What did Israel still lack?

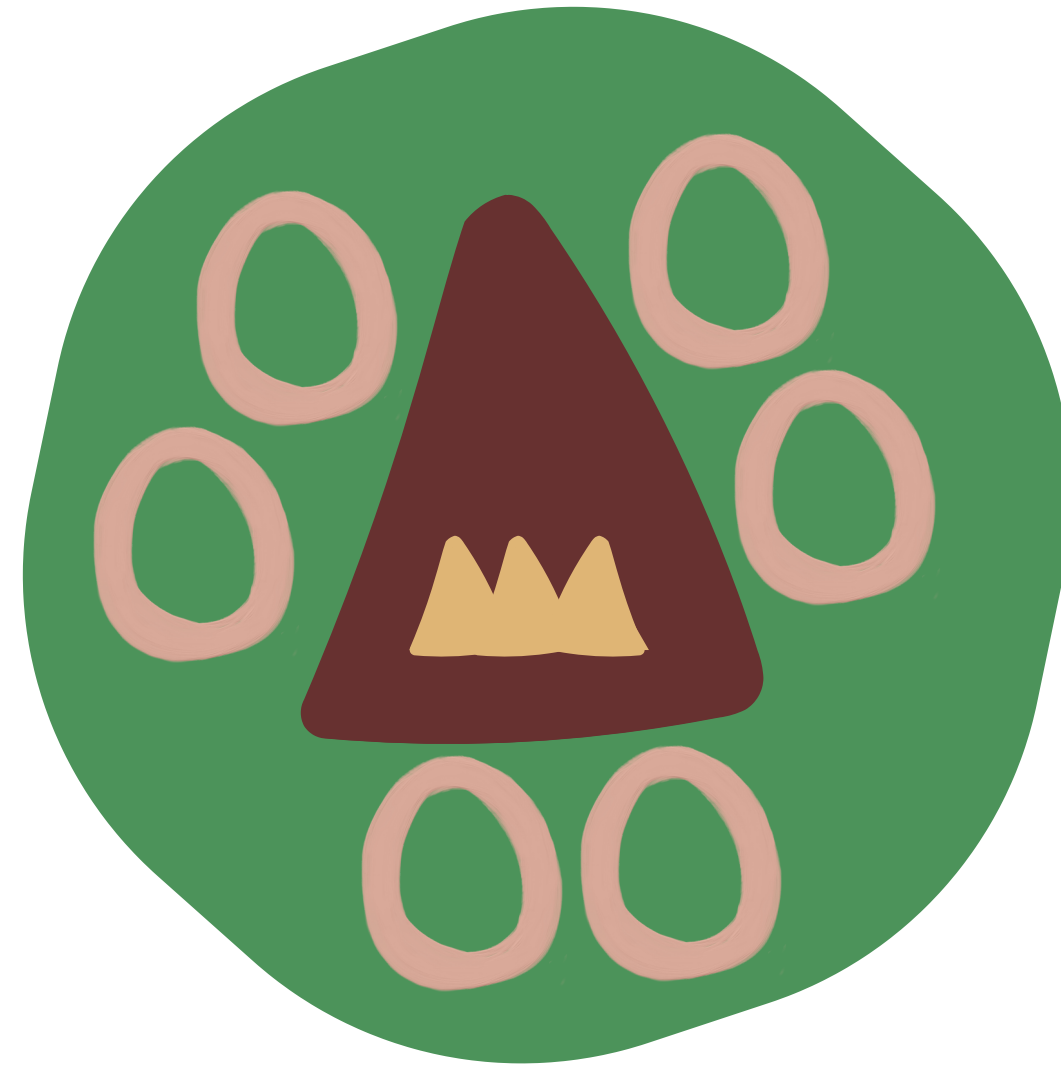
Even though Israel wandered from the God of their **ancestors**, he remained faithful. Israel became a great kingdom, enjoying peace and security. Their greatest king was named “David.”

God made a covenant with king David. God’s promise concerned David’s offspring,

“I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son” (2 Sam 7:13–14).

This “son of God” would not only rule Israel; he would reign over all nations (Ps 2; 72:8; 89:27; 2 Sam 7:19).

In so doing, this person will also fulfill God’s covenants with Abraham and Moses. David’s offspring will lead God’s rescue plan.



Sadly, the Davidic line became **corrupt** and turned from the Creator God. The kingdom was divided by civil war. Israel’s kings were proud and worshipped false gods. They loved wealth, power, and praise.

They wanted to be like the nations around them.

They did not trust God's promises. Instead, they trusted godless prophets and depended on their relationships with other nations. Eventually, God allowed kings to take Israel into exile. They had exchanged the glory of God for the shame of slavery.

What about God's promises?

Hadn't he promised that king David's descendent would rule forever? How could God use a weak and unclean people to bless the nations?





KEY QUESTIONS

1. What did God promise David?
2. How does this covenant with David relate to the God's promises to Abraham and Moses?
3. What was the problem with Israel and her kings?
4. How do we seek praise from other people rather than the glory of God?
5. What was the consequence of Israel's shameful rebellion?



GOD NEVER FORGETS HIS PROMISES

KING JESUS

After many years, he brought the people of Israel, now called “Jews,” back into their homeland. Yet, they still suffered under the oppression of foreign rulers. The Jews became increasingly exclusivistic and prejudiced against outsiders, whom they called “Gentiles.” Nationalism grew. In order to secure God’s promises, many Jewish leaders urged people to be more vigilant in keeping their ancestral traditions. They used God’s Law to separate themselves from the Gentile nations.

In these conditions, a man named Jesus was born. Although he came from a common family, many celebrated his birth. Why?

Jesus belonged to the line of king David. Angels announced that this child is the “Christ,” the king who would fulfill God’s ancient promises.

Throughout his life, Jesus overturned social expectations. He healed the sick, the blind, and even those with demons. He also welcomed the poor, “sinners,” and other outcasts, including Gentiles. His ministry caused many to glorify God for his power and grace; yet, the social leaders thought Jesus’ behavior was scandalous. Jesus in turn exposed the hypocrisy in their hearts; the Jewish leaders loved “face” and honor. They wanted the praise of people more than the approval of God.

In all his actions and teachings, Jesus proclaimed the good news of God’s kingdom. He would free the oppressed and feed the needy. God sent Jesus to be the Christ, the promised to king David. Jesus, as the world’s true king, would save his people by defeating their enemies.

**WHAT WOULD
GOD DO?**

Not surprisingly, the social and political leaders did not welcome Jesus’ message.

They conspired together to execute Jesus Christ, even though his entire life perfectly honored the God of Abraham, Moses and king David. Although he had never sinned, the Jewish and Gentile leaders beat and crucified Jesus Christ on a cross. His faithfulness to the one true God led to suffering and death at the hands of his countrymen.

After he was buried, his disciples once again wondered, “**What about God’s promises?**” If this was God’s promised king, how could he suffer such unspeakable shame?

Yet, they forgot that the Creator works in surprising ways. Three days after Jesus Christ’s death, he rose from the grave! He showed himself many times to people; at one time, over 500 people saw him.



KEY QUESTIONS

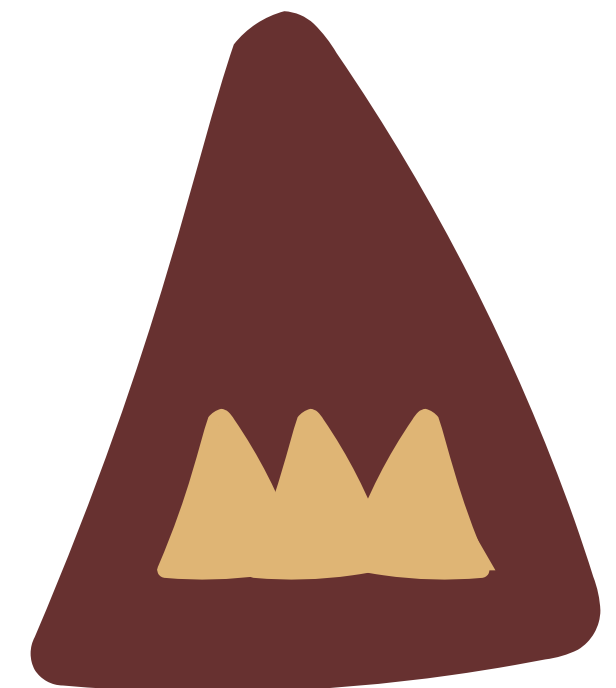
1. What new problems did Israel face?
2. Why did people celebrate the birth of Jesus? What does the name “Christ” mean?
3. Why did Jesus surprise people?
4. How did social leaders respond to Jesus?
5. How God demonstrate that Jesus is His promises king?

THESE EVENTS FOREVER CHANGED THE WORLD.

Remember the Mosaic covenant? God promised his presence. He revealed his desire to create a holy people. God's ancient Law foreshadowed God's ultimate plan, accomplished through Jesus.

Jesus' death and resurrection confirms a new and final covenant. Accordingly, God promises to give his Holy Spirit to those who follow Christ above all other so-called authorities and idols. The Holy Spirit changes people's hearts so that they seek to live pure and honorable lives. God creates a new "Temple," made up of all who worship the God of Jesus Christ. God's Spirit dwells with God's people, who are called the "church."

How is this possible?



Jesus accomplished what no person has ever done. He perfectly honored God in both his life and death. Therefore, God accepted Jesus' death as a sacrifice that atones for sin. Because he is the one true king of the world, he represents both Israel and Gentiles. Therefore, he **accepts** people from all nations into his Kingdom. God is not partial. Regardless of social class, gender, education or other social distinctions, he commands all people everywhere to give allegiance to Jesus as king.

God, through Jesus Christ, overturns the world's typical standards of honor and shame. Jesus shares his own **glory** with his followers. Those who are "outsiders" in society are honored as "insiders" in God's family.

Naturally, God's children must repent of their shameful ways. They now seek the glory of their heavenly Father.





KEY QUESTIONS

1. Because of Jesus' resurrection, his followers gain what blessings?
2. What does God's Spirit do?
3. Why does God accept Jesus' death as a sacrifice?
4. Whom does God accept?
5. What does God command of all people?



Before Christ ascended to his throne in heaven, he gave his disciples a special calling—to represent him in the world.

God will use Christ's church to fulfill his promise to Abraham. His people will bless the world by proclaiming Christ's Kingdom and making disciples from among all nations. God's family will testify to God's plan to **reconcile** the human family to himself and to one another.

In this way, the church gathers for the sake of worship and ministry. Their manner of life together will testify to the day when God will recreate a **new heaven and new earth**.

Eventually, God will rescue people from all the nations. His church looks forward to the day when Christ will return. On that day, he will purge the world of evil and corruption. He will finally put all his enemies to shame. All will be made right. **“The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea”** (Hab 2:14).

All nations will be blessed when God dwells among his people.

KEY QUESTIONS

1. How does God use Christ's people, the church?
2. What will God do when Christ returns?
3. How does God keep his promise?





**WHEN YOU
LOOK AROUND,
WHAT DO YOU
SEE?**

Leaders use fear and power to seek power and wealth. Family and friends continually seek social honor, i.e. “face.” The world seems to be falling apart, cursed and corrupt.

By contrast, **Jesus is a king** who delights to serve his people. He seeks to honor us as people who belong to God’s family. When he returns, he will resurrect our bodies! He will restore creation and so make it a place of blessing.

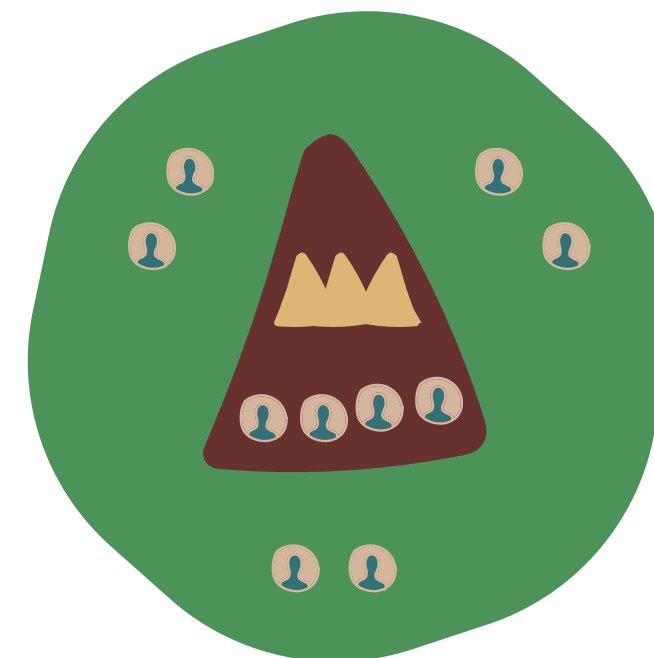
God is **righteous**. Therefore, he does not forget his promises. In Jesus, the Creator God fulfills his promises to Abraham, Moses and king David. When others fail us, God is faithful.

God blesses all nations and creates a worldwide family through the King of all Kings – Jesus Christ.

This is good news!

Jesus makes a promise to everyone who hears this good news:

Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.” (Mark 10:29–30)



Because of this good news, we need to ask a few important questions.

Will you give your allegiance to Jesus as King?

Do you believe God is faithful to keep his promises?

Are you willing to repent, changing your ways so that you honor God rather than dishonor him with all your life?

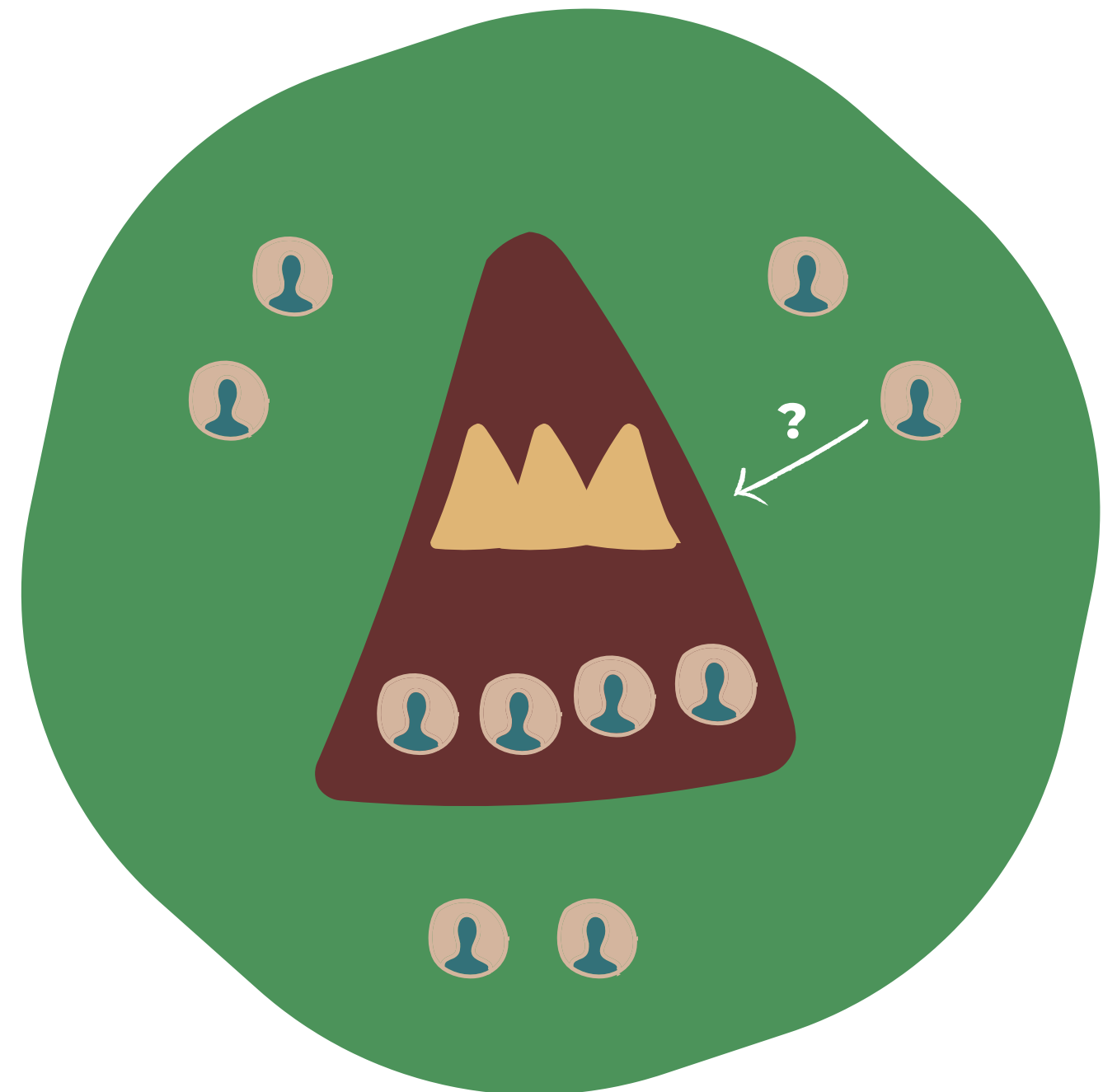
If, in your heart, you can truly answer “yes,” then God welcomes you into his Kingdom! If God the Father has changed your heart in this way, then you belong to his family! Together, Christ’s followers are called his “church.” They have become your true brothers and sisters.

**HOW WILL
YOU RESPOND
TO GOD'S
KING?**

You have a **new identity**. Therefore, God now gives you a new mission in life. He calls his people to reflect his glory in all the world. We must proclaim this good news to others. Also, as his church, we are to live in ways that demonstrate what Christ's Kingdom is like.

What if you are not yet willing to follow Jesus?

Remember only the Creator King is able to keep his promises. All other hopes will fail us. Those around us cannot give us lasting honor, love, and peace.





**MAY THIS GOOD
NEWS CHANGE
YOUR HEART
FOREVER.**

