

God
THE
&
CHURCH

WEEKS 37-45

LOVE
> THIS <
BOOK

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Part 4 of the Love This Book journal.

This year we'll take a journey through the entire story of scripture. This journal is designed to be our companion.

When we think of journaling, we might think of an English class project from years ago, or an empty notebook waiting to be filled with thoughts, dreams or random ponderings. This scripture journal is a bit different.

Each week, we'll focus on a set of scripture passages together. Once we've spent time reading God's Word, we can then reflect on what God is speaking into our lives. Taking the time to write our reflections can help us capture our thoughts and emotions. As these authors put it...

"As we journal [on God's Word] we pray to God, we ask ourselves probing questions, we think through issues, we put on paper the 'stuff' tumbling about in our heads. We become more connected with God, ourselves, and ultimately with others."

—Mindy & Jeff Caliguire, *Write for your Soul: The Whys and Hows of Journaling*

HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL

Each week, you'll find four pages that contain the following sections:

Section 1: SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

In the first section, we'll give you an overview of the week's readings and you'll have space to read, reflect and respond to a set of Bible passages. Feel free to use this in any way that helps you connect with God. Perhaps you'll want to read all the passages in one day and reflect on those passages the next day. Or you could read one passage each day, reflecting and responding along the way.

READ: For each week, there are passages listed for each day (5x week). Begin by reading through the passage for that day. As you read, take notes about the words or phrases that stand out to you.

REFLECT: What main theme(s) is highlighted in the passage? What questions come to your mind? What insights do you have into God, His character or your own life as you reflect on this passage?

RESPOND: Thinking back over the passage, where do you sense God drawing your attention? Can you identify action steps to take in response? What can you offer back to God in prayer as a response to this passage? Take time to pray.

Section 2: PSALM

The Psalms are to be used for a time of prayer throughout each week. Sometimes they go along with the other readings, but often they're simply psalms that speak of God's character and the response of His people to who God is and what He has done. In this section, feel free to doodle, color, highlight or underline. Experiment—and see what helps you to connect with God!

"The Psalms are poetry and the Psalms are prayer... They are not provided to teach us about God, but to train us in responding to Him. We don't learn the Psalms until we are praying them."

—Eugene Peterson, *Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer*

Section 3: REVIEW

After the Scripture passages and Psalm pages, you'll find a third page with three questions that will prompt you to reflect on the readings for the past week. Take time to respond to these questions. Give yourself time to think over all the passages you've read for the week. What are the main themes God has impressed upon you in His Word?

Section 4: SERMON NOTES

Finally, we included a page for you to wrap up your week with sermon notes as you make your way through the Love This Book journey. Please consider bringing your journal with you to church each week!

We believe that this will be a useful tool to help you engage and grow as you read God's Word and as we commit as a church to Love This Book.

—Craig Gartland
Pastor of Spiritual Formation
Blackhawk Church

BIBLE READING

God & THE CHURCH

WEEK 37

MATTHEW 28; ACTS 1; ROMANS 1:1-17, 3:21-31, 9:30-10:21, 15:14-33;

ISAIAH 65-66; PSALM 92

Overview: This week, we begin with the reading from Matthew 28, the Great Commission. This section is comprised of Jesus' directive to the new people of God to be the people of God in the world. It's an intentional exile. Both the readings in Matthew 28 and Acts 1 remind us that people in the Kingdom of God are not just there to receive salvation and enjoy the fruits of being the people of the Kingdom of God, but they are given a mission to share those fruits with the world around them. Then we move into Romans 1 which discusses the coming of the Gentiles as part of God's plan for the church, as a going outward and making disciples of all nations. Isaiah 55-56 also focuses on the worldwide impact of the Kingdom of God.

READ

REFLECT

RESPOND

PSALM ^{OF} *the* WEEK

PSALM 92

- 12 The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,
they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;
13 planted in the house of the LORD,
they will flourish in the courts of our God.
14 They will still bear fruit in old age,
they will stay fresh and green,
15 proclaiming, "The LORD is upright;
he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him."

REVIEW OF *Week 37*:

The last words of the Gospel of Matthew (28:16-20) are referred to as the “Great Commission”. What encouragement and challenge would these words be to Jesus’ disciples? To you? Paired with Acts 1, what is the expanse of this commission?

Romans focuses on righteousness by faith - in contrast to the law. How is this at the heart of the gospel (“good news”)? From this and Isaiah 65-66, how are Jesus and the church at the center of God’s plan to fulfill His promises, which began with Israel?

Psalm 92 speaks of God’s people flourishing throughout their lives. Thank God for His love and faithfulness toward His church. Pray we might flourish as His people in the world, committed to His purposes.

MESSAGE *Notes*
GOD'S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH

BIBLE READING

God & THE CHURCH

WEEK 38

1 TIMOTHY 1-3; 1 TIMOTHY 4-6; 2 TIMOTHY 1-3; 2 TIMOTHY 4, TITUS 1-2; PSALM 96

Overview: Each of the Timothy passages have a lot to do with hanging on to what has been taught: guarding doctrine, guarding proper teaching. There is a sense that the teaching of the church can be threatened by both corruption within and influence from the outside. This week we celebrate 500 years of Protestantism - the call to be “reformed and always reforming,” continually asking the Scriptures to shape us and reshape us in the face of these internal & external pressures.

READ

REFLECT

RESPOND

PSALM ^{OF} *the* WEEK

PSALM 96

7 Ascribe to the LORD, all you families of nations,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
bring an offering and come into his courts.

9 Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness;
tremble before him, all the earth.

10 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns."

The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved;
he will judge the peoples with equity.

REVIEW OF *Week* 38:

In his pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus, we see Paul's vision for the church. What stands out to you? What threats did the church face then that we still face today? How is the church to remain strong and grounded?

Scripture and sound teaching are emphasized throughout 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. How does Paul see their importance in the life of the church? What challenge or encouragement does this give you in your own commitment to Scripture?

Psalm 96 calls all nations to worship the Lord and proclaim His glory. Take time to pray for God's glory and "good news" to be known throughout the world.

MESSAGE *Notes*

THE CHURCH TODAY

BIBLE READING

God & THE CHURCH

WEEK 39

ACTS 1-2; ACTS 3-5; GENESIS 11-12; PSALM 2, JOEL 2; PSALM 98

Overview: Genesis 11, the story of the Tower of Babel, highlights one of the main plights of this world: Humanity is hopelessly divided. Genesis 12 begins the story of Abraham that culminates in the story of Pentecost, the coming together of all peoples joined as one as the great reversal of the Tower of Babel. We'll also look at Psalm 2, the promise of the worldwide reign of God and Joel 2, the pouring out of the Spirit on the people of God. They're the Old Testament connection to what happens in Acts.

READ

REFLECT

RESPOND

PSALM ^{OF} *the* WEEK

PSALM 98

- 1 Sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done marvelous things;
his right hand and his holy arm
have worked salvation for him.
- 2 The LORD has made his salvation known
and revealed his righteousness to the nations.
- 3 He has remembered his love
and his faithfulness to Israel;
all the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.

REVIEW OF *Week 39*:

In Acts 1-5 we have the “birth account” of the New Testament church. How is this “new people” of God defined by the Holy Spirit? What characterizes their life with one another and with others – both blessings and challenges?

As you read these Old Testament passages (from Genesis, Psalm 2, Joel), what is the continuity with God’s original plans for a people and that which transpires in Acts 1-5? How does this speak to God’s commitment to His plans and His promises?

Psalm 98 proclaims, “all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.” Join with the psalmist in praising God for how He has revealed Himself and remains faithful to His plans and promises.

MESSAGE *Notes*

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BIRTH OF THE CHURCH

BIBLE READING

God & THE CHURCH

WEEK 40

JOHN 14–16; JOHN 17, EZEKIEL 36:16 – 37:14; GALATIANS 5–6; 1 CORINTHIANS 12–14,
ROMANS 8:1–27; PSALM 118

Overview: All our readings focus on the Holy Spirit, both in the Old and New Testament. The passages we're reading are mostly derived from the New Testament, in which the concept of the Spirit undergoes a drastic transformation. We'll also study a passage from Ezekiel that gives a broad sense of what the Holy Spirit is about.

READ

REFLECT

RESPOND

PSALM ^{OF} *the* WEEK

PSALM 118

- 1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.
- 2 Let Israel say:
“His love endures forever.”
- 3 Let the house of Aaron say:
“His love endures forever.”
- 4 Let those who fear the LORD say:
“His love endures forever.”
- 5 When hard-pressed, I cried to the LORD;
he brought me into a spacious place.
- 6 The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?
- 7 The LORD is with me; he is my helper.
I look in triumph on my enemies.

REVIEW OF *Week* 40:

In a final message to His disciples before His death (John 14-17), Jesus speaks to them of the coming Holy Spirit. How does He describe the Holy Spirit and the role He is to have in their lives? What hope would this have given them?

Paul writes about the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christ follower. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in relationship to sin? The fruit of the Spirit? Spiritual gifts? What are some potential challenges that Paul addresses?

In his fear and anguish, the psalmist (Ps. 118) finds solace that, "the Lord is with me." As the gift of God's presence in our lives, spend time in thanksgiving for the Holy Spirit.

MESSAGE *Notes*

THE HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE READING

God & THE CHURCH

WEEK 41

ACTS 5-8; EXODUS 3-6, DEUTERONOMY 18:14-22; 1 PETER 1-3; 1 PETER 4-5; PSALM 121

Overview: Our readings this week focus on the Jerusalem church. The Acts passages discuss the problems the Church faces, both internal and external. The passage from Exodus serves as a reminder that meeting with God does not lead to everything going great. The Deuteronomy passage is an exploration of how to evaluate the people who speak for God. We look at the story of Stephen, who was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke for God in Acts 5-8. Our 1 Peter reading is all about the persecution of the church through external opposition.

READ

REFLECT

RESPOND

PSALM ^{OF} *the* WEEK

PSALM 121

- 1 I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
- 2 My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
- 3 He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
- 4 indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- 5 The LORD watches over you—
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
- 6 the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.

REVIEW OF *Week 41*:

Even with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the early church faced great challenges and persecution. How did they face them? How do these experiences echo those of Moses and his prophetic mission?

In 1 Peter we read to, “not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.” How is a Christ follower to make sense of trials? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the midst of suffering?

Fears and feelings of helplessness can grip and immobilize us. How do the words of Psalm 121 address this and offer hope? How can you make this psalm your prayer?

MESSAGE *Notes*
THE JERUSALEM CHURCH

BIBLE READING

God & THE CHURCH

WEEK 42

ACTS 9:1-31, 16-18; ACTS 19-23; ACTS 24-28; 2 CORINTHIANS 10-13; PSALM 63

Overview: This week is focused on Paul and his story. We look at versions with both a third-person view and first-person discussion of Paul's view of himself. It's a huge story of transformation. He meets Jesus and everything changes. But it's also about a person who is passionate for God from the get-go and how God draws Paul to Himself. He sees the world through a fundamentally different lens, one of the future. He doesn't experience much of the whole picture in his lifetime. By the time he dies, there are just a few Jesus communities scattered across the Mediterranean. Despite his limited perspective, he can see the glory of the coming Kingdom of God.

READ

REFLECT

RESPOND

PSALM ^{OF} *the* WEEK

PSALM 63

- 1 You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no water.
- 2 I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.
- 3 Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.
- 4 I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.
- 5 I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

REVIEW OF *Week* 42:

These passages in Acts focus on Saul/Paul - his conversion and then singular vision for God's mission for the church. What challenges does he face? What successes and sufferings? How does the church grow despite resistance?

In 2 Corinthians 10-13, Paul both defends his ministry and honestly shares his struggles. How was his life characterized by, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (12:9). What might this look like in your life?

Paul's life was one of passion for God - like the psalmist in Psalm 63. Where in your life might God be calling you to deeper passion for Him and His purposes?

MESSAGE *Notes*

SAUL/PAUL'S JOURNEY FROM PERSECUTOR TO APOSTLE

BIBLE READING

God & THE CHURCH

WEEK 43

ACTS 9:32 – 12:24; ACTS 12:25 – 15:35; GALATIANS 1-2; COLOSSIANS 1-2;

PSALM 133, PSALM 67

Overview: We once again return to the theme of ethnicity. This is one of the big issues in the Church. We see the Jerusalem Council story as well as the story of Cornelius. We'll also look at the process for Gentiles becoming Christians. The Colossians readings will cover the idea of unity; it's less confrontational and more collective. It's all about God bringing the world into unity under Christ.

READ

REFLECT

RESPOND

PSALM ^{OF} *the* WEEK

PSALM 67

- 1 May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face shine on us—
- 2 so that your ways may be known on earth,
your salvation among all nations.
- 3 May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.
- 4 May the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you rule the peoples with equity
and guide the nations of the earth.
- 5 May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.

REVIEW OF *Week* 43:

Acts 9:32-15:1 focuses on the move toward the full inclusion of Gentiles into the growing early church. What part do Peter and Paul have in this? What resistance is faced and how is it overcome? Where do we see God at work in this process?

In Galatians 1-2, Paul fills in more of his story regarding his call “as an apostle to the Gentiles” (2:8). Why was Paul so passionate about this mission? What implications did it have for him regarding the gospel? What implications does it have today?

Psalms 133 speaks of unity among the people of God and Psalm 67 of God’s ways being known on earth. Spend time praying for unity among God’s people today, that we might reflect His purposes on earth.

MESSAGE *Notes*
CORNELIUS + JERUSALEM COUNCIL

BIBLE READING

God & THE CHURCH

WEEK 44

ROMANS 12-15; DEUTERONOMY 15:1-18, 24:6-22; COLOSSIANS 3-4;
PHILEMON; PSALM 138

Overview: Our readings for this week focus on Philemon, the runaway slave, and how the gospel intersects with this story. The main idea is how the gospel should transform our behavior and direct how society is structured. The earlier readings remind us about how slavery works in the older law, but there's nothing specifically in these passages that say to overthrow the concept of slavery. And yet in Philemon, you can see hints of it. This is how the Kingdom of God begins to intersect with corrupt secular social structures.

READ

REFLECT

RESPOND

PSALM ^{OF} *the* WEEK

PSALM 138

- 1 I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;
before the “gods” I will sing your praise.
- 2 I will bow down toward your holy temple
and will praise your name
for your unfailing love and your faithfulness,
for you have so exalted your solemn decree
that it surpasses your fame.
- 3 When I called, you answered me;
you greatly emboldened me.

REVIEW OF *Week* 44:

Both Romans 12-15 and Colossians 3-4 speak of the ways Christ followers are to live counter-culturally in this world. In what ways are you most encouraged and challenged by these passages?

The short letter of Philemon is also a message of Christ-centered, counter-cultural living. How is the gospel shown to challenge corrupt social structures (like slavery) through love and transformation of the heart?

The psalmist in Psalm 138 speaks of being “emboldened” by the Lord (v. 3). Where in your life do you feel the need to be emboldened, especially as a follower of Christ? Offer this to the Lord in prayer.

MESSAGE *Notes*
THE GOSPEL IN THE WORLD

BIBLE READING

God & THE CHURCH

WEEK 45

GENESIS 1-2; I THESSALONIANS 4-5; 2 THESSALONIANS 1-3;
REVELATION 21-22; PSALM 148

Overview: This week we focus on Genesis 1-2 to set up the vision for what's to come in the Kingdom of God. We have Revelation 21-22, which show you the ending chapters of the Bible and how they correspond to Genesis 1-2. This is really the end of the story. We have 1-2 Thessalonians where Paul addresses what a future hope looks like and how the story finally ends.

READ

REFLECT

RESPOND

PSALM ^{OF} *the* WEEK

PSALM 148

- 1 Praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise him in the heights above.
- 2 Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his heavenly hosts.
- 3 Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars.
- 4 Praise him, you highest heavens
and you waters above the skies.
- 5 Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for at his command they were created,
- 6 and he established them for ever and ever—
he issued a decree that will never pass away.

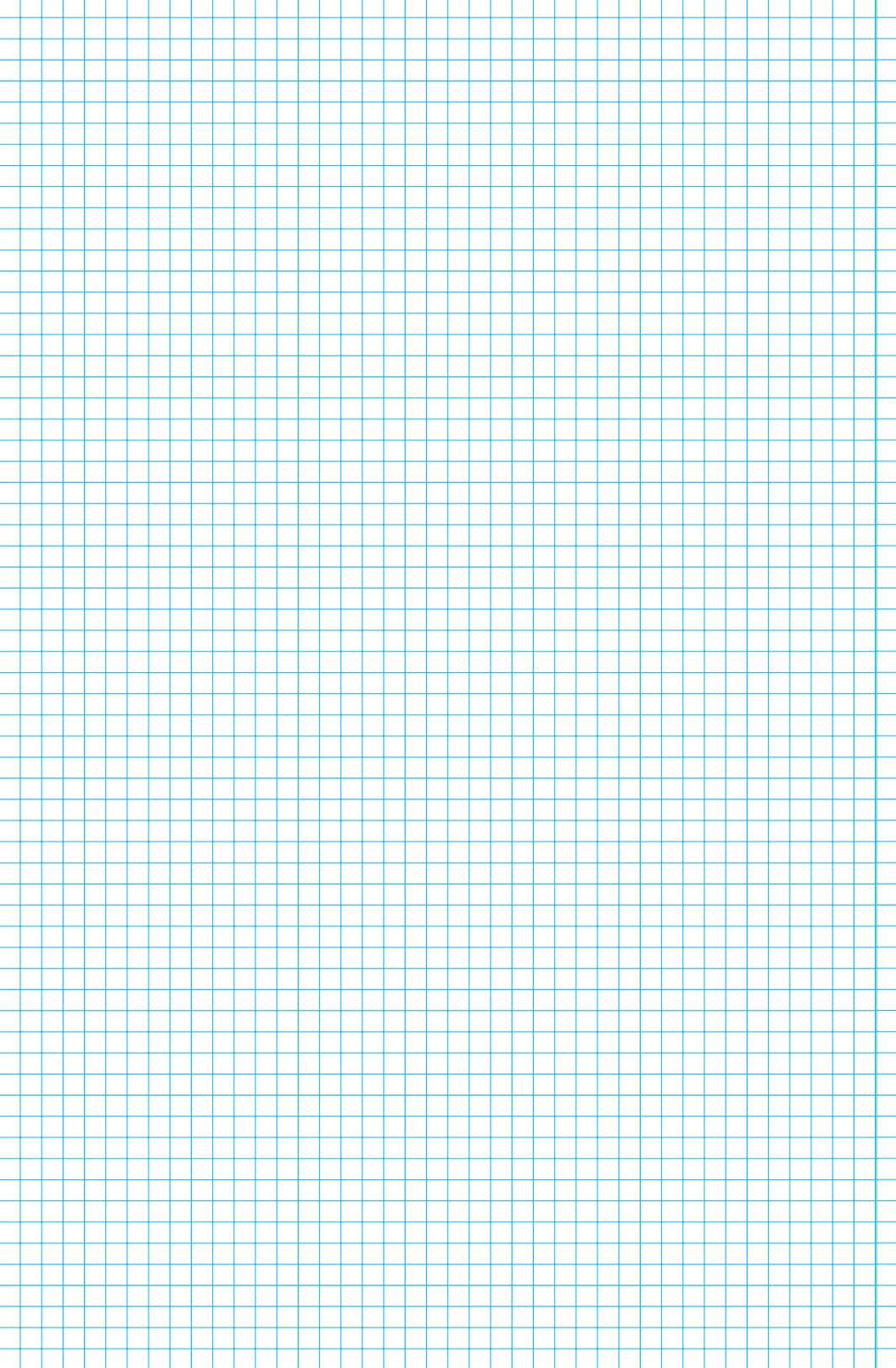
REVIEW OF *Week* 45:

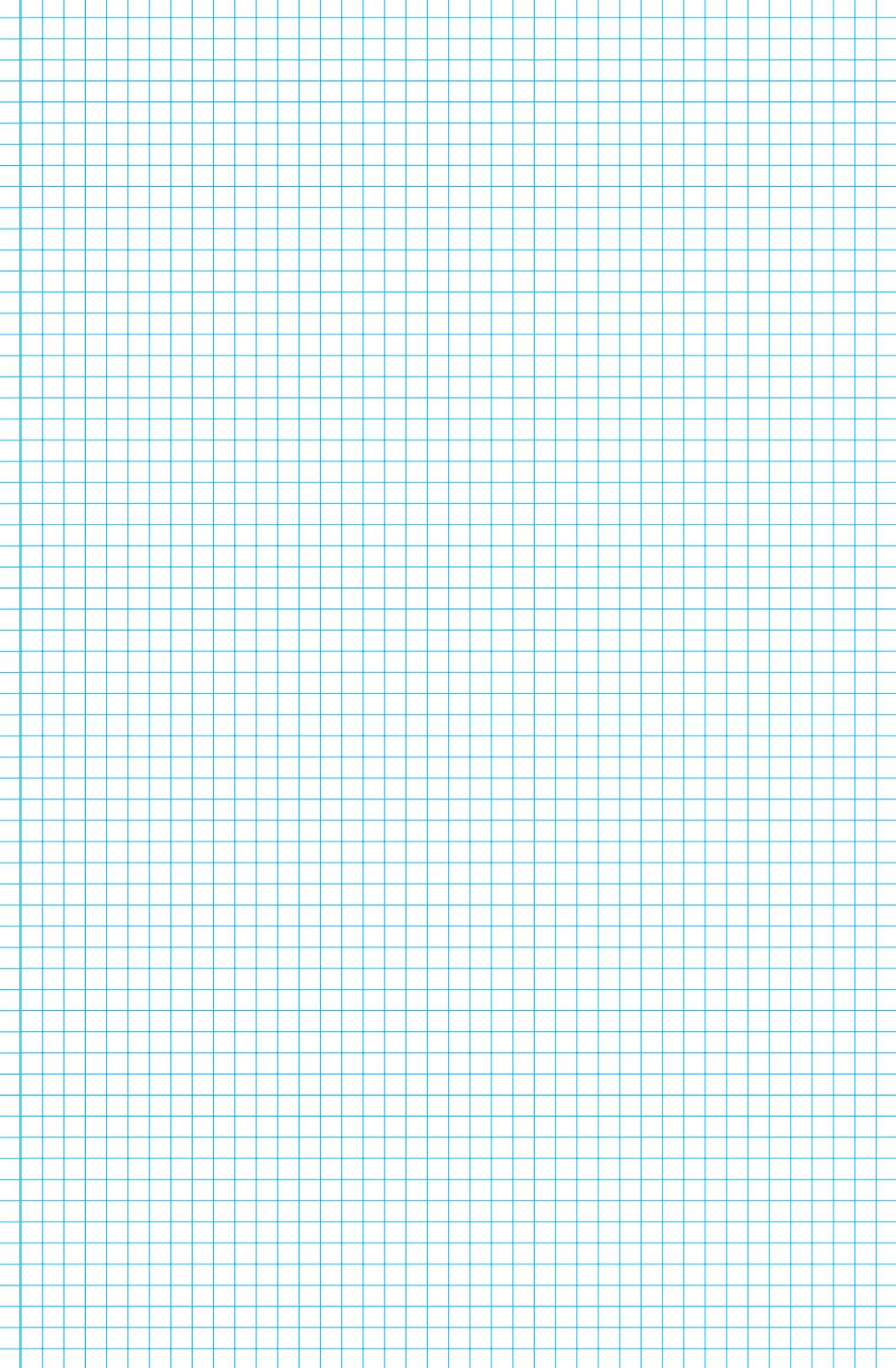
As a “bookend” to Scripture, how does Revelation 21-22 bring the story of God full circle – a story starting in Genesis 1-2? What from the beginning shows up in the ending? Why is this significant? What hope does this give you?

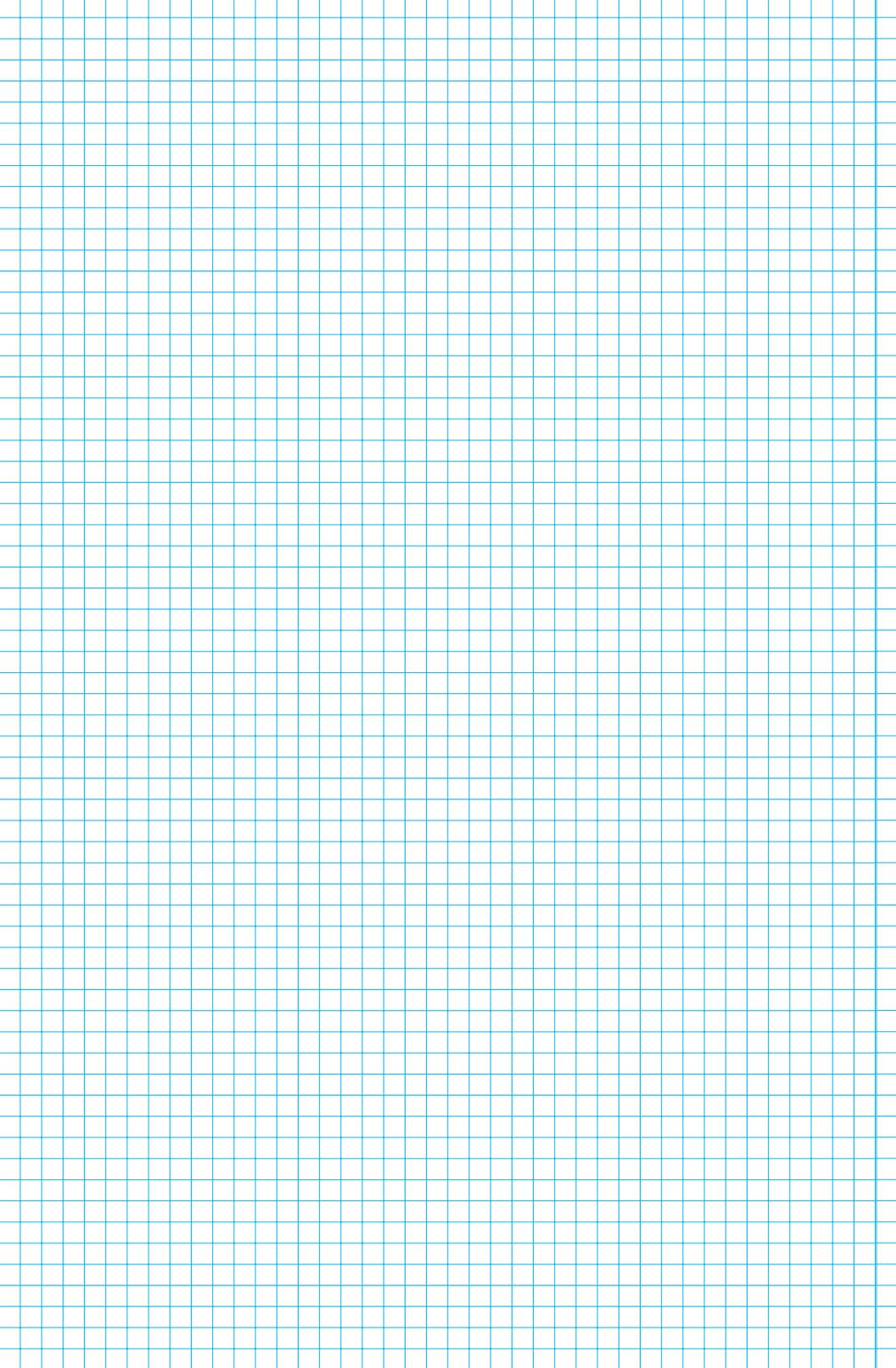
In his letters to the Thessalonians, Paul addresses the return or “day of” the Lord. What wisdom does he offer and how can Christ followers prevent being deceived? What difference should the “coming of the Lord” make in our life currently?

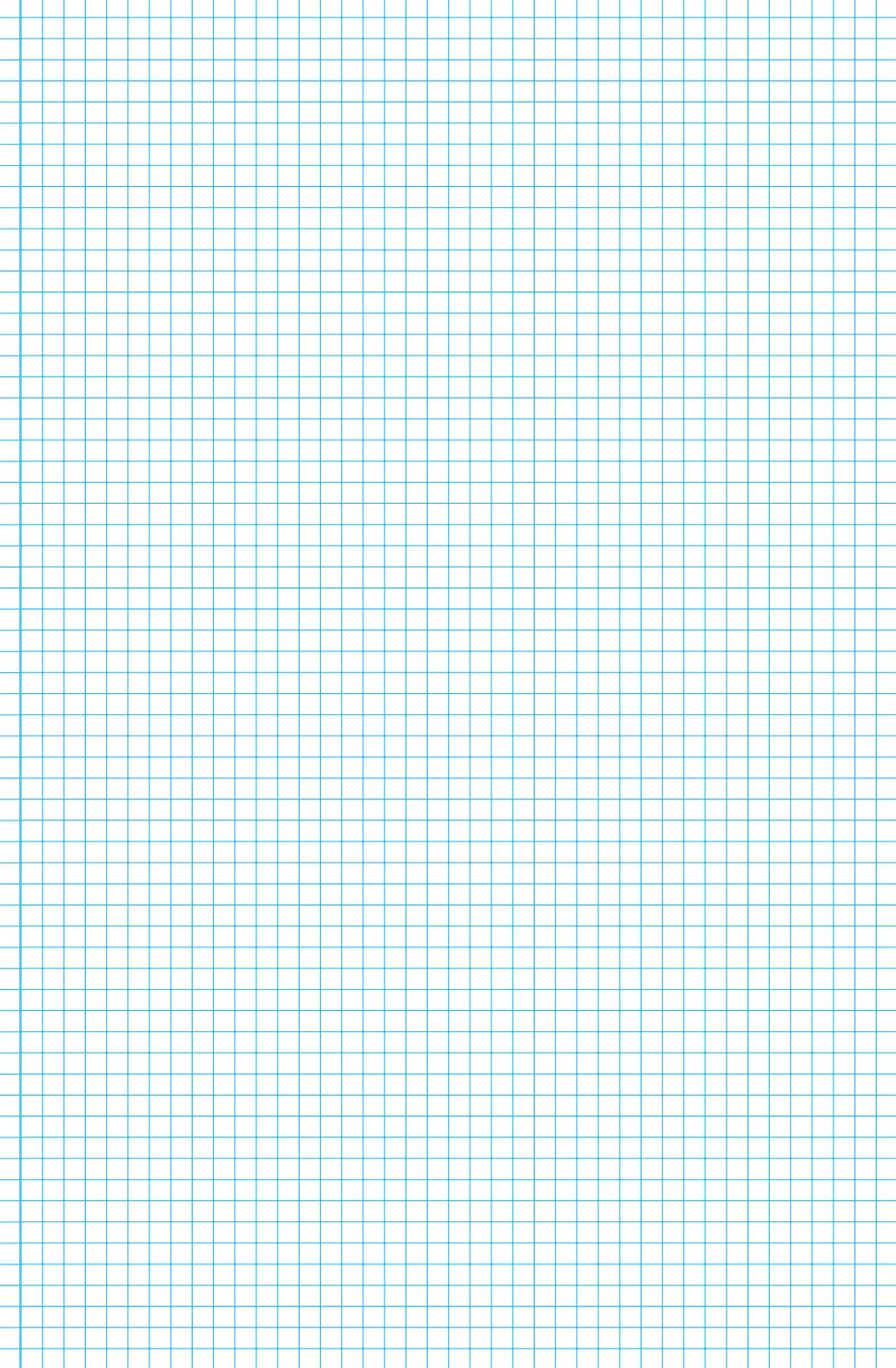
Psalm 148 is a call for all of God’s creation to praise Him. As people created in God’s image to worship and praise Him – through eternity – make this psalm your prayer.

MESSAGE *Notes*
THE RETURN OF THE KING









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