

Introduction

Today, we're going to walk through the Bible's big story—from creation, through death and the Law, to Christ, judgment, and the new creation.

The Bible is clear: this world is not the end. Heaven is coming. The age to come is certain.

**So here's the question I want us to sit with for a moment:
If heaven is coming, why does life now matter at all?**

At some point in our lives, we all struggle with this.

And whether you're a Christian or not, people tend to drift into a few familiar ways of thinking about life:

Fatalism	“Nothing here really counts.”
Escapism	“Real life is later.”
Moral bargaining	“If living life doesn't save me, why bother?”

These aren't abstract ideas. They're real reactions real people have to the question of meaning.

Take a few minutes in your breakout groups and talk honestly about this:

If heaven is coming, why does life now matter at all?

1) Salvation History

1) The Bible tells us that God has one coherent plan for all of history

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Ephesians 1:7-10)

2) From beginning to end, God explains this plan to us through Law and Gospel

¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” ¹⁶ To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.” (Genesis 3:15-16)

¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14)

3) But there is still a shape to history: an Era of the Law and an Era of the Gospel

²³ Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. (Galatians 3:23-24)

¹³ In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. (Hebrews 8:13)

¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)

4) God's purpose in every period of creation history

The first week	The very good creation (Genesis 1:31) —> This establishes God's purposes for creation.
~4000 BC	The reign of death (Romans 5:14) —> This period reveals universal death without God.
~1500 BC	The ministry of death (2 Corinthians 3:7-9) —> This period clearly shows sin is the cause of this death.
~0 AD	The last days (Hebrews 1:1-2) —> ??
The last day	The day of judgment (Acts 17:31) —> This brings truth into the open and defeats death.
The age to come	The new heavens and new earth (2 Peter 3:13) —> This restores God's purposes for creation.

For breakout groups: What is God's purpose in the last days?

Passages that may help: Hebrews 1:1-2; Colossians 1:19-20; Matthew 24:14

2) The Old Testament

The first week The very good creation (Genesis 1:31)

God spoke. God saw. God rested. (Genesis 1:1-2:4)

~4000 BC The reign of death (Romans 5:14)

~4000 Fall & spread of death (Genesis 2:5-5:32) [1 Chron 1-9 until David]
~2400 Flood (Genesis 6-9)
~2300 Tower of Babel (Genesis 10-11)
~2000 Promise to Abraham (Genesis 12-36) [Job]
~1800 Israelites enter Egypt (Genesis 37-50)

~1500 BC The ministry of death (2 Corinthians 3:7-9)

~1500 Exodus; Law given to Israel (Exodus 1-Deuteronomy 34)
~1400 Conquest of Canaan; time of judges (Joshua-Ruth)
~1000 United Kingdom (1 Samuel 1-1 Kings 11)
~1050 Saul
~1010 David and his Covenant [1 Chronicles 10-29; Psalms]
~970 Solomon [2 Chronicles 1-9; Proverbs; Ecclesiastes; Song]
~930 Divided Kingdoms (1 Kings 12-2 Kings 25)

Southern Kingdom Judah Northern Kingdom Israel
[2 Chronicles 10-28]

~750 Isaiah; Micah; Joel ~850 Elijah & Elisha
~750 Amos; Hosea
722 Exile to Assyria

[2 Chronicles 29-36]
715-686 Hezekiah
640-609 Josiah
(~640-620 Zephaniah; ~620-600 Habakkuk; ~627-586 Jeremiah)
586 Exile to Babylon
(~593-571 Ezekiel; ~605-535 Daniel; ~586 Obadiah)
538 Return from Exile
(~520 Haggai; ~520-480 Zechariah)
516 Temple rebuilt
458 Ezra's reform
445 Nehemiah rebuilds Jerusalem's walls
~430 Malachi

For breakout groups: Why has God given us the Old Testament?

Passages that may help: Romans 15:3-4; 1 Corinthians 10:6-11; 1 Peter 1:10-12

3) The New Testament

~0 AD

The last days (Hebrews 1:1-2)

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

~4 BC Birth of Jesus

~27 AD Baptism of Jesus

~30 Death, Resurrection, Ascension of Jesus

Acts

~30 Pentecost; Jerusalem Church (Acts 1-8)

~34 Paul's conversion (Acts 9)

~45-48 Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 10-14)

~49 Jerusalem Council (Acts 15; Galatians)

~49-52 Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 15-18; 1-2 Thessalonians)

~53-57 Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 18-21; 1-2 Cor; Romans)

~60-62 Paul imprisoned in Rome (Eph; Phil, Col; Philemon)

After Acts

~63-67 Paul's final ministry and martyrdom (1-2 Timothy; Titus)

~60-90 James; 1-2 Peter; Hebrews; Jude; 1-3 John

~70 Destruction of Jerusalem

~85-95 Gospel of John written

~95 Revelation

After the Apostolic Age (2 Thessalonians 2; Revelation)

~300-500 Institutional consolidation of the Papacy

1517-1522 Revelation of the antichrist

The last day The day of judgment (Acts 17:31)

The age to come The new heavens and new earth (2 Peter 3:13)

For breakout groups: Why do lives matter in the New Testament?

Ephesians 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:58

Conclusion

If heaven is coming, why does life now matter at all?

Life matters because God says it does.

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

in the Lord your labour is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Human beings struggle with this, because we assume:

“Life can only matter if I'm *earning something*.”

This comes from our **self-righteousness, because we are all sinful.**

Fatalism	“Nothing here really counts... if I don't earn something by it”
Escapism	“Real life is later... when I can do things that earn something forever”
Moral bargaining	“If living life doesn't save me, why bother?... because my actions only have value if I'm earning something”

Paul responds to this:

³⁵ But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” ³⁶ You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.... ⁴² So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.... ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. (1 Corinthians 15:35, 42-44, 49)

The first week	The very good creation (Genesis 1:31) —> Shows us the good that God wants.
~4000 BC	The reign of death (Romans 5:14) —> Shows us that things are not good without God.
~1500 BC	The ministry of death (2 Corinthians 3:7-9) —> Our self-righteousness caused that problem.
~0 AD	The last days (Hebrews 1:1-2) —> God wants you to trust him and walk in love
The last day	The day of judgment (Acts 17:31) —> We will see everything as it truly is.
The age to come	The new heavens and new earth (2 Peter 3:13) —> We'll be grateful for what God did, not disappointed.