

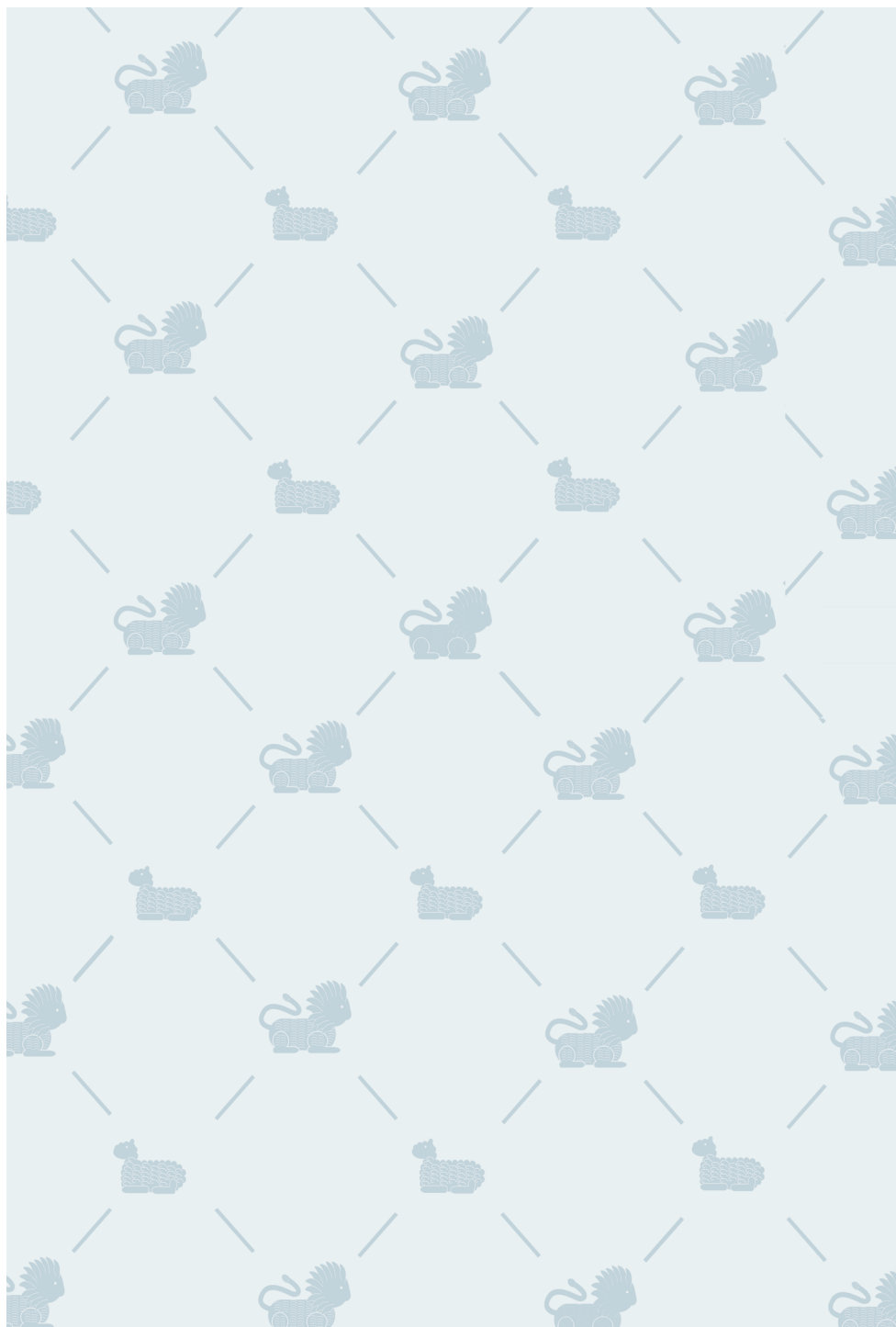


BIBLE READING PLAN: **40 DAYS ON THE KINGDOM**



Corps Resources
for individuals



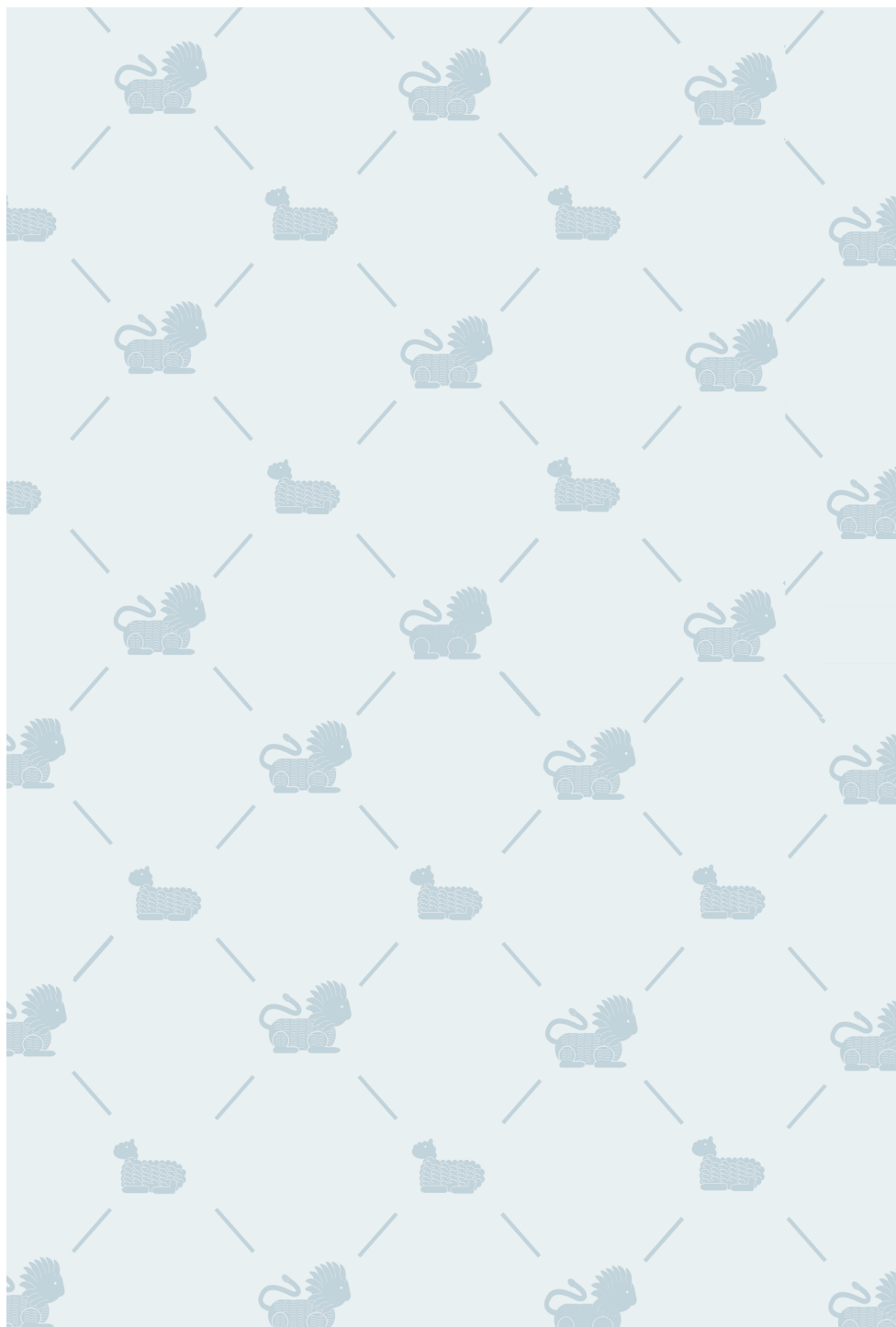




BIBLE READING PLAN: 40 DAYS ON THE KINGDOM

The Kingdom of God is Near

Jesus' central teaching was that the kingdom of God was near. But what exactly did he mean by that? 40 Days on the Kingdom is a Bible Reading Plan designed to help you understand what Christians mean when we speak about "the Kingdom of God". Each day in the plan includes a biblical reference to read, and some contemplation questions to ponder. The plan builds up a broadly biblical picture of the kingdom of God, starting with how the people of Israel understood the kingdom of God, how the exile increased their expectation of a messiah who would inaugurate God's rule on earth through the state of Israel. Then we look at Jesus' teachings and how his miracles pointed to the kingdom. Finally we look at the tension of God's kingdom being "here" but also "still coming". What is our responsibility as Christians in the lead-up to the consummation of the kingdom?



ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Day 1 › God Calls Abram

Read › Genesis 12:1-9

Contemplate › What does God promise Abram in this passage? What is the basis of the greatness of the nation that will come from Abram? What is God's intention in blessing Abram, and making his descendants into a great nation?

Day 2 › God Makes a Covenant with Abram

Read › Genesis 15:1-20

Contemplate › What obstacles need to be overcome for God's promises to Abram to be fulfilled? What does God tell Abram will happen to his descendants? What does God promise to Abram regarding after his descendants come out of Egypt? What kind of nation, or kingdom will God give them?

Day 3 › God Gives Abram and Sarai New Names

Read › Genesis 17:1-27

Contemplate › Compare God's initial promise to Abram in Genesis 12, with the name God gives to Abram here. What is the significance of the meaning of the name "Abraham"? What does God promise Sarai, Abram's wife? What is the significance of Ishmael being part of the covenant of circumcision? How does this link with God's promise that all nations will be blessed through Abram in Genesis 12:3?

Day 4 › God Promises to Save Israel from Egypt

Read › Exodus 6:1-8, 19:1-6

Contemplate › Compare these passages to Genesis 12. How has God extended the promise he initially made to Abram? What do you think a "kingdom of priests" would look like? What would it mean for Israel out of all nations to be God's treasured possession?

Day 5 › Israel Asks for a King

Read › 1 Samuel 8:1-21

Contemplate › When Israel first settled in the land, God appointed judges, and He was Himself their King. What is it specifically about the request for a human king that was so displeasing to God? What did God say would be consequences of a human king ruling over Israel? Why did Israel reject God, and want a human king instead? What would a kingdom look like where God was king, and there were no human intermediaries?

Day 6 › Saul Is Anointed and Made King

Read › 1 Samuel 9:15-10:27

Contemplate › Why does Saul object to the idea of him being King? What is the significance of Saul being anointed by the spirit, even though God was angry that Israel had requested a human king? What does Saul hiding in the baggage suggest about Saul?

Day 7 › Samuel Rebukes and God Rejects King Saul

Read › 1 Samuel 13-15

Contemplate › What did Saul do that led to Samuel rebuking him? What was the consequence for Saul's dynasty of his failure to wait for Samuel? What do verses 13-14 tell us about how kingdoms are established on earth? What key characteristic does God say it takes to be a good king?

Day 8 › David is Anointed

Read › 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Contemplate › What mistake does Samuel make when he arrives at Jesse's home? What assumptions about leadership does he make? In comparison, what matters to God? What is the significance of the spirit descending on David, in the same way as it had on Saul?

Day 9 › David Becomes King

Read › 2 Samuel 5-6

Contemplate › Why was David successful in capturing Jerusalem? To what did David attribute his kingship, and the growth of his kingdom? What was the difference in attitude towards God between King Saul and King David?

Day 10 › God's Covenant with King David

Read › 2 Samuel 7

Contemplate › What does God promise to King David? Is the promise of David's house and kingdom enduring forever conditional? What does this tell us about the king over God's kingdom?

ISRAEL AWAITS HER TRUE KING

Day 11 › God Is Angry with King Solomon

Read › 1 Kings 11-12

Contemplate › King David also sinned against God. What is the difference between King Solomon and King David? What does God say are the consequences of King Solomon's idolatry? Despite the punishment of Solomon, what does God promise because of David? What happens to the Israel because of Solomon's failure?.

Day 12 › Israel is Exiled

Read › 2 Kings 17

Contemplate › What happened to the kingdom of Israel, after God gave it to Jeroboam? What did the King of Assyria do with the land after the exile of the Israelites to Assyria?

Day 13 › Judah Goes into Captivity

Read › 2 Kings 24-25

Contemplate › What did God do to Judah as a result of their sins, including the "shedding of innocent blood"? Given the significance of the temple in Jewish society, as the place where God dwells with his people, what is the significance of the removal of the sacred items from the temple by Nebuchadnezzar? And the destruction of the temple by Nebuzaradan? What evidence of God's promise to David is seen in the treatment of Jehoiachin king of Judah, David's descendant?

Day 14 › A New King is Coming

Read › Isaiah 9:1-7, 11:1-16

Contemplate › In what ways do these passages point forward to Jesus? What does it tell us about the kingdom that Jesus would establish? What kind of King would Jesus be? How do these prophecies link back to God's promises to King David son of Jesse? And to the promises to Abraham?

Day 15 › The Righteous Branch of David

Read › Jeremiah 23:1-8

Contemplate › In the bible, shepherds are a metaphor for human leaders, particularly those appointed by God to tend his people. What does this passage tell us about the human rulers that had been over God's people? How will the situation be different under the King that God promises to raise up from David's family?

Day 16 › A King on a Donkey

Read › Zechariah 9:9-17

Contemplate › How is this prophecy fulfilled in the New Testament? What aspects of this prophecy are yet to be fulfilled? What does this say about the kind of kingdom God wanted to establish?

JESUS IS THE EMBODIMENT OF GOD'S KINGDOM

Day 17 › Jesus' Mission

Read › Luke 4:14-44

Contemplate › Verses 18-19 are often described as Jesus' mission statement. What does this tell us about God's kingdom? Given the historical background of Israel as God's "chosen people", why do you think it upset Jesus' hearers when he gave examples of God helping gentiles (the widow of Zarephath, Naaman the Syrian)? What aspects of the kingdom are demonstrated by Jesus driving out evil spirits, and healing people? What do all these things tell us about God's kingdom?

Day 18 › Jesus' Sermon on the Mount

Read › Matthew 5-7

Contemplate › How does Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God contrast with the ways our society would think are normal ways to live life? What kind of standard does Jesus set for living the kingdom life? Does it bother you that Jesus said, "unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (5:20)? Why do you think Jesus taught us to pray "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (6:10)?

Day 19 › Jesus' Parables of the Kingdom I

Read › Matthew 13:1-52

Contemplate › What do the parables of the sower, mustard seed and the yeast teach us about the way the kingdom spreads? What does the parable of the weeds tell us about the "imperfect" nature of the kingdom at the present time? What do the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl tell us about the value of the kingdom? What does the parable of the net tell us about the future of the kingdom?

Day 20 › Jesus' Parables of the Kingdom II

Read › Matthew 18:1-35

Contemplate › What does this chapter tell us about the way we come into the kingdom? How is the idea of coming as a child, rather than as "the greatest" subversive of human tendencies? What does the passage tell us about the value of "the little ones" to God? Why is forgiveness so important to God? How is this connected with the idea of coming as "a little one" into the kingdom?

Day 21 › To Whom Does the Kingdom Belong?

Read › Matthew 19

Contemplate › How does this passage contrast those who think they are righteous (the Pharisees, the rich young ruler) with the values of God's kingdom? What three values does this chapter highlight as kingdom values? How does this contrast with the things that our society values?

Day 22 › Woe to the Pharisees

Read › Luke 11:37-12:12

Contemplate › The Pharisees prided themselves as being righteous before God through their practice of the law. Yet Jesus rebukes them, what do the six woes tell us about values that are NOT of God's kingdom that may flourish in religious circles? How does this passage indicate that God judges people? According to what they profess? Or what they practice?

Day 23 › Judgement of Jerusalem

Read › Luke 13:22-14:35

Contemplate › Compare 13:26, 14:1-14 and 14:15-24. How is the image of eating and drinking used throughout this passage to show what the kingdom of God is like? How does 13:28-30 indicate that the promises to Abraham will be fulfilled? Why would this have been contentious to Jesus' Jewish audience? What do you think Jesus' desire regarding Israel and Jerusalem is? How does this fit his kingdom plan?

Day 24 › Lord, Will You At This Time Restore the Kingdom to Israel?

Read › Acts 1:1-11

Contemplate › Jesus' disciples were always expecting the immediate and complete arrival of God's kingdom. They understood this as being the restoration of the kingdom of Israel, through David's descendant Jesus. What does this passage tell us about the consummation of the kingdom and the mission of the church?

Day 25 › At the Name of Jesus Every Knee Shall Bow

Read › Philippians 2:1-13

Contemplate › What does this passage tell us about Jesus' path "to the top"? How was it that he became exalted to the highest place, so that every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father? How does this connect with Jesus' idea of the first being last, and the last being first? What does this tell us about the culture of God's kingdom? How then should we live?

THE CONSUMMATION OF THE KINGDOM

Day 26 › Jesus Has Gone to Prepare a Place

Read › John 14:1-31

Contemplate › What does Jesus tell us in this passage that he is doing prior to his return? What is the connection between the idea of the place Jesus has gone, and his ongoing role of being “the way”? Going back to the idea from the Old Testament about God anointing a human king to rule over God’s kingdom on earth, how significant is the idea that what Jesus does, he does for the glory of the Father? On what basis does Jesus say that he and the Father will come and make their home among us? How do we see the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness opposed to each other in this passage?

Day 27 › The Return of the King

Read › Matthew 24-25

Contemplate › What does Jesus directly tell us about what it will be like when he returns? What kind of treatment can his followers expect as the kingdom of darkness rebels against God’s kingdom? What do you think Jesus’ meant by “All these are the beginning of birth pains” (24:8)? What does Jesus tell us about the timing of his return? What does being ready for Jesus’ return look like? On what basis does Jesus say he will separate the sheep and the goats? How then should we live before he returns?

Day 28 › Be Ready for the Jesus’ Return

Read › Luke 12:32-53

Contemplate › What does Luke highlight as the nature of watchfulness for Jesus’ return? How significant do you think the way he talks about money and justice (beating of servants, self-indulgence in food and drink) are in what God expects in terms of Christian watchfulness? Why do you think Jesus says that believers who do not do what he wants will be assigned a place with the unbelievers? Why do you think this message would not bring peace but division? Why does Jesus specifically highlight nuclear family relationships as being divided by Jesus’ teaching?

Day 29 › Coming of the Kingdom

Read › Luke 17:20-37

Contemplate › How is the kingdom among us? What was Jesus telling the Pharisees? How did this compare with their expectation of the coming of the kingdom? If the kingdom was amongst them, how had they missed it? If Jesus is the King, then why do you think Luke contrasts the two ideas of the presence of the kingdom among them versus Jesus soon not being able to be found?

Day 30 › Awaiting the day of the Lord

Read › 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

Contemplate › What does this passage tell us about the return of Jesus and its implications both for believers who are still alive when that occurs, and those who will already have died? Compare this passage to Exodus 19:16-19, how does this impact your understanding of what will happen when Jesus returns? How does this passage tell us we should live in light of Jesus' return?

Day 31 › The Man of Lawlessness

Read › 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

Contemplate › This passage makes allusions to the period between the two testaments when Antiochus Epiphanes set up a pagan religion in Israel, encouraging its people to break covenant with God and worship other gods. Many Jews died for their faith, many others killed for their faith. Google "1 Maccabees catholic.org" and read the first two chapters for historical background. In light of that picture of lawlessness, what do you think Paul is getting at in this passage? How are Paul's instructions to the Thessalonians for dealing with the man of lawlessness different from the way the Jews had dealt with Antiochus Epiphanes under the direction of Mattathias? What does this contrast highlight about the way God's kingdom works?

Day 32 › Godlessness in the Last Days

Read › 2 Timothy 3:1-4:5

Contemplate › What does Paul say will happen in the last days? To what extent can you identify those characteristics in our culture? What is Paul's advice to Timothy for dealing with that godlessness? How should Christians live as the last days approach?

Day 33 › The Spirit of Grace Will Be Poured Out On Israel

Read › Zechariah 12:10-13:2

Contemplate › Israel rejected Jesus when he came. What does Zechariah say will happen to Israel when they realise who Jesus was? Why will the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (David's holy city), mourn for Jesus as for a firstborn son? How does this link to God's promises to David?

Day 34 › The Salvation of Israel

Read › Romans 9-11:32

Contemplate › Why did God harden Israel? What does this passage tell us about how the gentiles came to be included in the kingdom? How does the inclusion of the gentiles fulfil God's promise to Abraham? What does Paul say will happen when Israel is saved? What does this indicate about the significance of Israel in the final coming of the kingdom? What level of caution should we take as gentile Christians so that we too will not be broken off?

Day 35 › The Scroll & the Lamb

Read › Revelation 5:6-14

Contemplate › Why do you think that the apostle John depicts Jesus as a lamb "looking as if it had been slain" on the throne? Is there anything surprising about Jesus' continued glory as the one who was crucified, given that he is now enthroned? What does this tell us about power and authority in God's kingdom? What does this passage say Jesus' work achieved for God? What will the reign of God's people over the earth look like, given that they serve "a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain"?

Day 36 › The Defeat of the Dragon

Read › Revelation 12

Contemplate › What does this passage tell us about the coming of God's kingdom? How does the casting down of Satan contribute to the rule of God on earth? In what three ways does this passage say Christians overcome Satan before Christ's return?

Day 37 › The King of Kings and Lord of Lords

Read › Revelation 19-20

Contemplate › How does this passage reveal Jesus? How is this image the same or different from the image of the lamb who looked like it had been slain (Rev 5 – See Day 35)? Whose blood is on his robe? Why are the robes of the armies of heaven white and clean? Why do you think that those who were martyred are resurrected first to reign with Christ for one thousand years? What do you think is the connection between being priests of God and of Christ, and ruling with Christ?

Day 38 › The Resurrection of the Body

Read › 1 Corinthians 15:12-58

Contemplate › On what basis does Paul argue that those who are in Christ will enjoy a bodily resurrection? When will it occur? What does this passage tell us about Jesus' final intention after he has destroyed all dominion, authority, power and death? How do you think the handing of the kingdom back to the Father relates to the Davidic covenant? Given Jesus' appearance after his resurrection as a template, what do you think it means that we will "bear the image of the man from heaven"?

Day 39 › New Heaven, New Earth

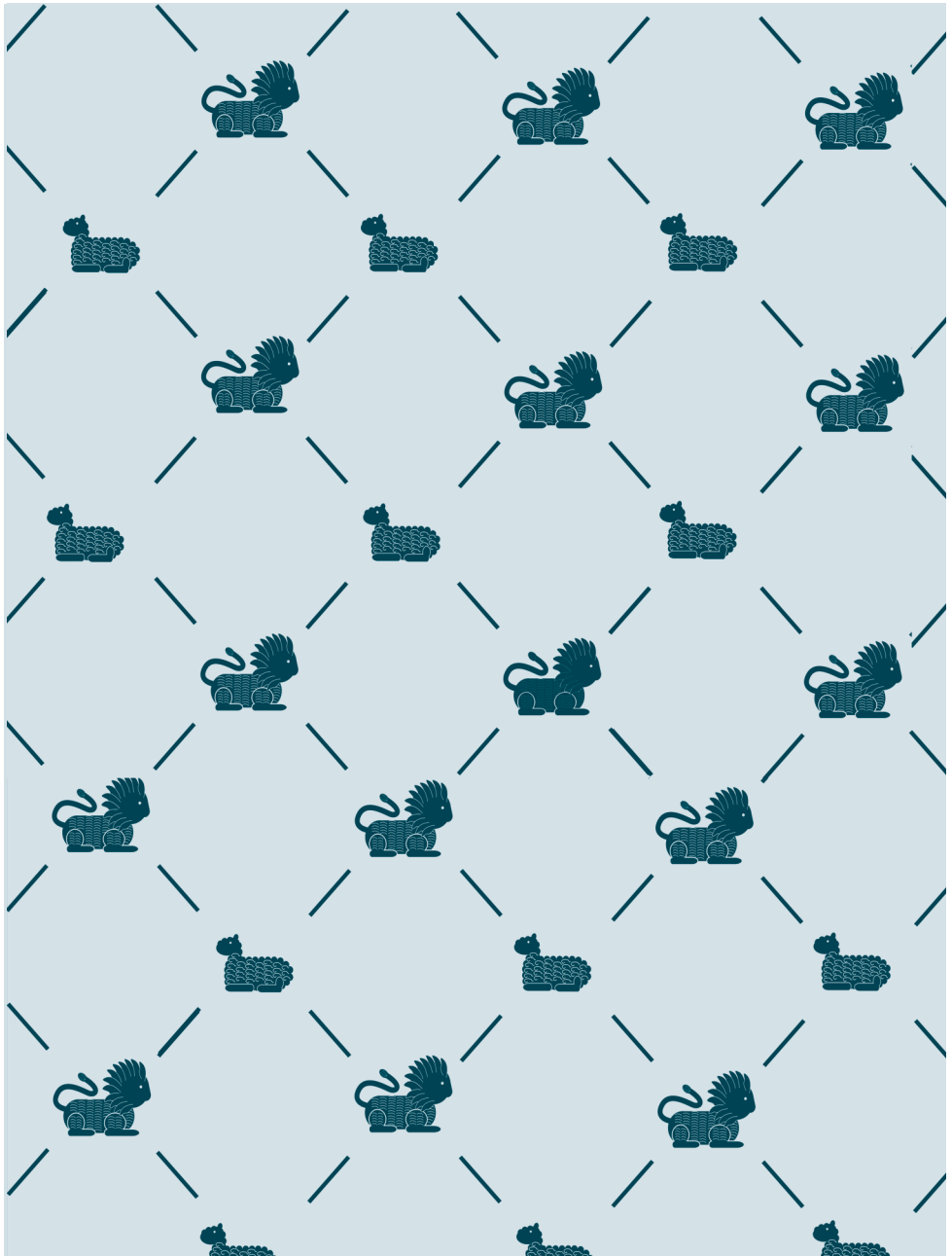
Read › Revelation 21

Contemplate › What does this passage tell us about God's kingdom? How does the idea of Jerusalem descending from heaven to earth, and God dwelling on earth with his people different to the idea of God's kingdom as a purely spiritual realm? What does Jesus say in this passage is his work? What do you think the second death is? Do you see in this passage the fulfilment of God's promises to Abraham? Has God been faithful to Israel, as well as to his Gentile followers? What evils have been overcome forever?

Day 40 › Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Read › Revelation 22

Contemplate › Why do you think the tree of life bears twelve crops of fruit? What do you think is the relationship between "throne of God and of the Lamb" and the saints "reigning for ever and ever"? How does this connect with how God intended for the kings of Israel to rule? What do you think Jesus means when he says he is both the root and the offspring of David? Jesus says three times in this passage that he is coming soon... What are his instructions for those who await him? How then should we live?



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