History of Redemption
The Message of the Bible in 10 Lessons

Diocese-Based Leadership Training Program
Mennonite Churches of East Africa (KMC/KMT)

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### Introduction

The Bible is a story – the story of redemption. The Bible tells us that God created and blessed all things, then God created humankind in his image, he blessed them, and they enjoyed fellowship with each other. But the man and woman chose to disobey God and trusted their own strength and wisdom rather than God’s.

Since the man and woman disobeyed, God made a plan to redeem them and to rebuild the relationship with them. The message of the Bible is the history of this redemption. God made a covenant with his chosen people; God will be their King, and through them God will bring the Redeemer of the whole world.

But this redemption was not completed immediately, God chose to reveal himself and to bring redemption progressively, beginning in the Garden of Eden until the New Jerusalem, where redemption will be complete. God began to reveal himself when he created humankind in his image, and completed his revelation in Jesus Christ.
1. Creation of the World

God’s perfect plan; the creation as God intended it

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. God separated the sea and the dry land, created trees, plants, and animals. God created humankind in God’s image – with spirit, mind, and character of love and fellowship, and created them male and female.

God prepared a garden and placed the man and woman in the garden to care for it and for their food. God created two trees in the garden, the Tree of Life for their well-being, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil to test their obedience and faithfulness. God said they may eat of every tree in the garden except from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And God saw that everything he had made, and it was very good.

1. Genesis 1:2. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
   - Who was present in the beginning? (God)
   - What did God do in the beginning? (created the heavens and the earth)

2. Genesis 1:27. God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.
   - What is the image of God in humankind?
     o God does not have a physical body, God is spirit.
     o Holiness – pure, for God’s purposes only
     o Living being – mind, emotions, choice, self-awareness, creativity, responsibility (Genesis 2:7)
     o Spirit – to know God and have a relationship with God (Romans 8:16)
     o Love (1 John 3:16)
     o Fellowship – it is not good for the man to be alone (Genesis 2:18); God walked and talked with them in the garden (Genesis 3:8)
     o Responsibility – subdue, rule over, fill the earth (Genesis 1:28)

3. Genesis 2:16-17. You are free to eat of any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...
   - How did God provide for the needs of mankind? (Genesis 2:9)
   - What commandment did God give to the man and woman? (Genesis 2:16-17)

4. Genesis 1:31. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.
   - Man and woman in God’s image
   - Man and woman to help each other
   - The world for the enjoyment and health of mankind
   - Fellowship between God and mankind, and among humankind

For discussion:

1) Why is it important that we recognize God as Creator?
2) What is the character and nature of God’s image in us?
3) Why did God place the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the garden?
4) What was the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil?
5) Why was God pleased with all that he had made?
6) Explain the nature of the relationship between God and mankind in the beginning.
2. Disobedience and Rejection of God’s Plan

God’s purpose rejected; the earth is cursed; pain and toil for mankind

Satan entered the garden in the body of a snake (serpent) and tempted the man and woman to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He deceived them and they began to doubt God’s command that they should not eat of that Tree. They saw the fruit was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, desirable for gaining wisdom, and they ate. At once they recognized that they were naked and they hid themselves from God. Their disobedience brought shame and fear, it brought a curse on the ground and caused pain in their lives. They were removed from the garden.

1. Genesis 3:1. The serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals God had made.
   - Who was in the body of the snake?
   - Read Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:11-17. These verses are about kings who were enemies of Israel, but many think the enemy kings are examples of Satan.
     - According to these verses, what was Satan’s character when he was created?
     - What was Satan’s sin that had him removed from heaven?
   - What does the Bible say about Satan’s character now? Read John 8:44, 1 Corinthians 11:14, Revelation 12:9-10, 1 Peter 5:8.

2. Genesis 3:1,4-5. The serpent said to the woman, Did God really say, You must not eat from any tree in the garden? You will not surely die....
   - How did Satan deceive the woman? What doubts did Satan cause them to have?

3. Genesis 3:6. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.
   - What command did Adam and Eve disobey when they were attracted and tempted by their physical desires?
   - What benefit did Adam and Eve expect to receive by eating the fruit?
   - Read 1 John 2:15-17. Why are we not able to love the world and also love God?

4. Genesis 3:8-10. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden..., and they hid from the Lord God....
   - Why did Adam and Eve hide from God when they heard his voice?

5. Genesis 3:14. God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, cursed are you....

6. Genesis 3:16-19. To the woman he said, I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; ...your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you. To Adam he said, ...cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it....

For discussion:

1) What is the underlying reason for our sin?
2) What was the result of disobedience for the serpent? (v.14-15). For the woman? (v.16). For the ground? (v.17). How do we see these results today?
3) Read Genesis 3:15. How is this a promise for redemption? Who is your offspring?
4) How does God’s redemption include all things? Read these verses about redemption: Ephesians 1:7; Titus 2:14; Romans 8:19-23; 1 Peter 1:18-19.
3. Abraham – Call and Covenant

*Promise and covenant between God and Abraham*

After the creation and Adam and Eve’s disobedience, God purposed to redeem the people he created, and to bring redemption through a chosen people. God chose Abraham and Sarah and promised to make them into a great nation, to make them a blessing to all people. Abraham left his father’s house, took Sarah his wife, and followed God’s leading into the land of Canaan. Everywhere he went, Abraham built altars and worshipped God. Because of their faithfulness and obedience, God made a covenant with Abraham and Sarah. God promised to give them the land of Canaan and their descendants will be **as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore** (Genesis 22:17).

Abraham and Sarah gave birth to Isaac; Isaac and Rebekah gave birth to Jacob and Esau; Jacob and Rachel gave birth to 12 sons. Among those sons was Joseph, who was sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt. Later Joseph was given a high position over the land of Egypt because he interpreted Pharoah’s dream and saved Egypt from famine.

Jacob, also named Israel, and his family went to Egypt to get food during the famine. The people of Israel stayed in Egypt more than 400 years. They increased in number and became a great nation.

**1. Leave your country, your people, and your father’s household.** Genesis 12:1-3.
- What did God call Abraham and Sarah to leave? Where did God call them to go?
- What blessing did God promise them?

**2. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.** Genesis 13:14-17.
- God repeated the promise to bless them. What did God promise to give them?

**3. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham.** Genesis 15:7-21
- God repeated the promise and made a covenant with Abraham and Sarah.
- What did God ask them to bring for the covenant with Abraham and Sarah? (vs.9)
- God told Abraham that his **descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved**, but later they will be delivered (vs.13-14). What country was it?

**4. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and you will greatly increase your numbers.** Genesis 17:1-22
- God confirmed the covenant. What was the sign of the covenant? (vs.10)
- God changed their names.
  - Abram, *exalted father*, was renamed Abraham, *father of many* (vs.5)
  - Sarai, *princess*, was renamed Sarah, *mother of nations* (vs.16)

**5. The covenant established.** Genesis 17:7; Galatians 3:16
- God promised to confirm the covenant with Abraham’s descendants. According to Galatians 3:16, who are Abraham’s descendants?

**Questions for discussion:**

1) How have the descendants of Abraham and Sarah blessed the whole world?
2) Why did God change the names of Abraham and Sarah?
3) Read Galatians 3:29. How are we blessed by God’s promise to Abraham?
4) Explain how God’s promise and covenant show God’s love and faithfulness.
4. God redeems Israel from Egypt and makes a covenant

**Covenant between God and Israel; the Law is a shadow of complete redemption**

There was a famine in Canaan, so Jacob and his family went to Egypt for food. Joseph, son of Jacob, had been taken to Egypt by deception of his brothers. He saved Egypt from famine when he interpreted Pharoah’s dream, so Jacob and his family were welcomed in Egypt.

More than 400 years later, the Israelites had increased. Pharoah began to persecute the Israelites because they were many, so God called Moses to lead them out of Egypt. God delivered them with acts of power and miracles that brought judgement on the Egyptians. The Israelites entered the desert of Sinai. There in the desert God cared for them, he led them and gave them laws about worship and living. The laws were like a shadow of the salvation and redemption through Jesus Christ, and they showed God's love for his people.

1. **Israel in Egypt**
   - Exodus 1:6-14. Why did the king of Egypt put slave masters over the people? (11)
   - Exodus 3:7-10. What did God promise to do when he heard the cries of the people? (7)
   - Exodus 12:1-13. What did God command Israel to do to be saved? (*it is the Lord’s Passover* – meaning *I will pass over* you... verses 11, 13)

2. **Israel delivered from Egypt**

3. **God makes a covenant with Israel**
   - Exodus 19:1-6. What did God require of Israel? What did God promise Israel?
   - Exodus 24:1-8. Explain how they made the covenant between God and Israel.

4. **The New Covenant**
   - Galatians 3:24. What was the purpose of the Jewish Law?
   - Hebrews 8:5-6. How did tabernacle worship prepare the way for the Jesus?
   - Hebrews 10:1. Explain the meaning of shadow. How is the Law a shadow of the gospel?

**Questions for discussion:**

1) Discuss how Israel’s deliverance from Egypt is a shadow of complete salvation in the New Testament.

2) How was Israel’s slavery in Egypt an example of the bondage of sin today?

3) How does the Passover in Egypt help us understand Jesus?

4) Discuss how this story demonstrates God’s love and faithfulness.
6. Israel enters the land of promise  
*The promise of the land is fulfilled*

After the death of Moses, God chose Joshua to lead Israel into the land of Canaan. God destroyed the Canaanites because of their sin, and warned Israel that they will also be judged if they forsake God’s law (Deuteronomy 9:4-5; 28:58-63). God made Israel a nation to show God’s power to the nations of the world (Joshua 4:24).

There are three periods of Israel’s history in the land. 1) Judges – God chose judges to advise and lead Israel; 2) Kingdom of Israel – Saul, David, and Solomon ruled Israel and expanded its borders; 3) Two kingdoms of Israel and Judah. God sent prophets to warn Israel of their sin.

1. **God calls Joshua.** Joshua 1:1-9  
   - What did God command Joshua?  
   - What did God promise Joshua?
2. **Israel crossed the Jordan River.** Joshua 3:1-17  
   - In what order did Israel cross the Jordan River?  
   - Why was the Ark of the Covenant important?

The Ark of the Covenant was where God met his people. Inside the box were the tables of the law, and above was the Mercy Seat. Read the description in Exodus 25:10-22.

3. **Victory over the kings of Canaan.** Joshua 10:40-42  
   - Why was Israel able to conquer their enemies? (42)  
   - *Take possession of the land and settle in it...* (Numbers 33:53)
4. **Leaders of Israel** – 3 periods  
   - Judges. Judges 2:6-16  
   - *Kingdom* (1 Samuel 8:1-9); Saul (1 Samuel 10:1); David (2 Samuel 5:1-5); Solomon (1 Kings 1:38-40)  
   - Two kingdoms – Judah and Israel (1 Kings 12:1, 16-17, 20-21)
5. **The people of God in the New Testament.** 1 Peter 2:9-10. The nation of Israel is an example of the church; the status of God’s people fulfills the example of Israel.  
   - *Chosen people* – God has chosen us  
   - *Royal priesthood* – God has given us the law and made a covenant with us  
   - *Holy nation* – God brings us together to do his work  
   - *A people belonging to God* – the people of God are the dwelling of the Holy Spirit  
   - *Declare the praises of God* – God sends us to witness to his mighty deeds  
   - *People of mercy* – we have received mercy and grace from God

**Questions for discussion:**

1) Why did God make Israel into a nation?  
2) Read 2 Peter 1:4. As God’s people, what blessings and promises have we received from God?  
3) Read Romans 8:31-32, 38. How is Israel’s victory an example of our victory over sin?  
4) Discuss how this lesson demonstrates God’s love and faithfulness.
6. Israel taken into captivity

Disobedience and judgement

God judged Israel because of their disobedience and idolatry, and they were defeated and taken captive by their heathen neighbors. First, the king of Assyria conquered Israel, the northern kingdom, later the king of Babylon conquered the Judah, the southern kingdom. These kings took some of the Israelite people to their countries. God sent prophets in this time of trouble to warn Israel and to foretell the coming the Anointed One who will conquer the enemies of Israel and gather them again as God’s people. God will make a new covenant with them and give them new hearts of obedience (Jeremiah 31:31-34). And God will make them to be a kingdom of peace and bless the whole world through the Anointed One (Isaiah 9:2-7), who is the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Synagogue worship began during the captivity. They were far away from Jerusalem and the temple, so they began to gather in groups for teaching. The teachers were called rabbi, they taught and explained the laws of God.

1. God warned Israel about obedience and disobedience
   - Deuteronomy 28:1-9. What did God promise if they obey his commands?
   - Deuteronomy 28:15-19,36,49. What warning did God give if they disobey?
   - Deuteronomy 30:1-3. If they forsake God and are scattered, and then return to God, what did God promise them?

2. The kings of Israel and Judah
   - Some kings did evil. What kings are named in the following verses?
     1 Kings 15:25-26; 1 Kings 16:25; 1 Kings 16:33
   - Some kings did right. What kings are named in the following verses?
     1 Kings 15:11; 1 Kings 22:42-43; 2 Kings 12:2

3. The people of God taken captive by heathen nations
   - 2 Kings 17:5-8. What nation conquered and took captive the northern kingdom, Israel?
   - 2 Kings 25:8-12. What nation conquered and took captive the southern kingdom, Judah?

4. The prophets during the captivity foretold the New Covenant
   - Isaiah 7:14. What sign will God give? Read Matthew 1:22-23, the prophecy fulfilled.
   - Isaiah 9:1-7. What great light did Jesus bring (2)? What kind of king will he be (6-7)?
   - Isaiah 53:3-6. How do the sufferings of Jesus help us?
   - Jeremiah 31:31-34. Where is the law of the New Covenant written?

Questions for discussion:

1) Why did God allow heathen nations to take Israel into captivity?
2) What do we learn about God from the captivity of Israel and their return to the land?
3) How is the New Covenant better than the Old Covenant? (read Jeremiah 31:31-34)
4) Discuss how this lesson demonstrates God’s love and faithfulness.
7. Israel returns to the land of promise
Revival and redemption

The captivity brought changes to the thinking and faith of Israel. They recognized that they were taken into captivity because they worshipped pagan gods and did not follow God’s law of justice and truth. They began to understand that the kingdom of God is not a kingdom of this world, but a spiritual kingdom. Second, they saw that God does not live in temples but in the hearts of people. Third, they saw that justice and truth are not only acts of worship but they are to love God and their neighbor.

When they were permitted to return to their land, the first task was to rebuild the temple and offer sacrifices. They began to keep the holy days as God commanded, and to purify their lives. The second task was to build the wall and gates of Jerusalem for their protection.

The nation of Israel did not regain the respect and strength it had in the times of the kings, but they began to obey the laws of God. The return to the land was a time of spiritual revival and return to God. These events are “shadows” of the new covenant. God was preparing them to receive the Messiah. He will make a new covenant with them through the blood of Jesus and write his commandments on their hearts.

1. Israel returns to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1-6)
   - Israel was permitted to return by command of King Cyrus (1:1-4). They endured resistance and finished the temple (6:15)
   - They renewed temple worship. What holy days did they celebrate? (6:19)

2. Ezra comes to Jerusalem and teaches God’s law (Ezra 7-10)
   - What did the priest Ezra teach them? (7:10)
   - What did they see was the cause of their trouble? (9:13)
   - What sins did they repent of? (10:2). Why was this sin a threat to God’s people?

3. Nehemiah builds the wall of Jerusalem and corrects their actions (Nehemiah 1-13)
   - When Nehemiah heard the trouble of Jerusalem, what did he do? (1:1-11)
   - What did Nehemiah want to do when he returned to Jerusalem? (2:1-20; 6:15)
   - What injustice against the poor did Nehemiah correct? (5:1-13)
   - What did Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Levites read and teach? (8:1-3, 7-9)
   - What signs show that Israel began to keep the covenant with God? (9:1-3)

4. Spiritual revival and awakening
   - What are the results of God’s people following pagan ways? (Ezra 9:10-14)
   - Spiritual life comes from worship. What did they build first in Ezra 3:2?
   - Spiritual life needs order and discipline. What did Nehemiah build to protect the city and maintain order? (Nehemiah 2:17)
   - After the revival, what did the Israelites promise to do? (Nehemiah 10:28-29)

Questions for discussion:
1) What did Israel learn about God and his redemption while in captivity?
2) Discuss why it is important for people to study the word of God.
3) Does sin bring judgement and trouble today? Explain your answer.
4) What sin is there today, that prevents people from experiencing life and blessing?
8. Jesus the Redeemer

Redemption fulfilled

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. (Galatians 4:4-5)

When the time was fulfilled, Jesus was born. He was named Immanuel, meaning God with us. Jesus began his ministry by calling 12 disciples and teaching them about the Kingdom of God. It is a spiritual kingdom, not a political kingdom of this world (John 18:36). He did miracles of healing the sick and casting out spirits as signs of the Kingdom of God. Jesus taught love for all people, humble service, and his life demonstrated this. All of this was an example of the life of the Kingdom of God.

The Jewish leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy against God. They said he wants to be king and to overthrow the government. That led to his crucifixion in Jerusalem, but the third day he rose from death, which shows his authority over death and evil.

The law (old covenant) is only a shadow of the good things that are coming, not the realities themselves (Hebrews 10:1). Jesus’ life fulfilled the moral law because he followed the intention of the law, not just the letter of the law (Matthew 5:17,20-22,27-28). His life was an example of life in the kingdom of God. Jesus’ death fulfilled the ceremonial law as the sacrifice to end all sacrifices for our sins (Hebrews 9:11-15). The resurrection of Jesus shows his victory over death and empowers us to live in fellowship with God.

Jesus fulfilled God’s purpose to redeem humanity and the world from the bondage of evil and death that hold us captive and separated from God. Jesus made the new covenant by giving himself, the perfect sacrifice, and he reconciled us to God.

1. Jesus defeated the evil one who deceived humans so they disobeyed God
   - Genesis 3:15. What did God say? What did God mean, he will crush your head?
   - John 12:31. Who is the prince of this world? What will happen to him?
   - Luke 10:18. Who was Jesus talking to? What did he see happening to Satan?
   - Hebrews 2:14-15. What did Jesus’ death do for us?

2. Jesus fulfilled the law of the old covenant and brought life and wholeness
   - John 10:10. What did Jesus come to bring us?
   - Romans 6:4. Since Christ was raised from the dead, what kind of life may we live?
   - Romans 12:2. How are we changed as we give ourselves to God?

3. Jesus reconciled us to God and made the new covenant between God and man
   - Romans 5:10. We were reconciled to God through ____________________.
   - Hebrews 8:6. Jesus is the mediator of ________________, (see Jeremiah 31:31-33)
   - Luke 22:20. The cup of the Lord’s Supper is an symbol of ____________________.

Questions for discussion:

1) Explain how Jesus fulfilled the purposes of God to redeem humankind.
2) How is the new covenant better than the old covenant?
3) What is the difference between the kingdom of God and kingdoms of the world?
9. The Church

Living as redeemed people

The main task of the church is to bring redemption to the lives of people. Redemption was fulfilled by the death and resurrection of Jesus, there is nothing to add to be reconciled with God. But people must allow the work of the Holy Spirit in their spirits, to be changed and to become children of God. Jesus crushed the head of the serpent Satan, but he still prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).

The church is in the period between redemption fulfilled by the Jesus, and redemption completed, when the evil one will be conquered and bound. Redemption is fulfilled, but not completed.

In the church we should live life as it is in the kingdom of God. The nature of the church is love, the ministry of the church is service, the character of the church is life and peace. The church is the fellowship of persons who live according to the law of love and commit to help and build each other up, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. In the church, believers join together to praise and worship God for his great works. And they disperse to bring the word of life, the gospel, to the world that is under the bondage of death and the evil one.

Questions for discussion:

1) What signs do you see in our world today that Satan is still roaming around and that redemption is not complete?
2) Do you agree with the words, Redemption is fulfilled, but not completed? Explain.
3) God said to Adam and Eve, Increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it (Genesis 1:28). Jesus said, Go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). Discuss how these two commands are similar.
4) In your own words, what is the message of redemption and reconciliation that we announce to the world?
10. The New Jerusalem
Redemption completed

Our redemption will be complete in the New Jerusalem, after evil Satan has been bound and cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). All who believe in Jesus will be gathered, where there are no tears, no death, no pain. God himself will dwell among his people (Revelation 21:2-4). The river of life flows from the throne of God. The tree of life bears fruit every month and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. There is no curse and no night (Revelation 22:1-5).

The book of Revelation shows the victory of Jesus over evil, a victory that is described by images and signs that need interpretation. Scholars have different thinking about the meaning of the signs. But the basic meaning of the book of Revelation is that Jesus has conquered and will conquer and complete the redemption.

Jesus the Redeemer is Victor. The purpose of God since the beginning is to give life and to fellowship with people. In the New Jerusalem, the plan of God will be fulfilled and complete.

1. Victory over evil Satan
   • Revelation 5:9. Who are those who were purchased with the blood of Jesus?
   • Revelation 12:10-11. What is the power that overcame the evil one?
   • Revelation 20:10. What is the end of the devil Satan?

2. Abundant life, where there is no curse and no death
   • Revelation 21:1-4. Describe the New Jerusalem as explained in these verses.
   • Revelation 22:1. What is the source of the river of water of life?
   • Revelation 22:2. How does the tree of life bear fruit and leaves? What is their purpose?

3. God is among his people
   • John 14:2-3. What did Jesus promise his disciples?
   • Revelation 21:3. Why is it important that God should live among people?
   • Revelation 21:22. What kind of temple is in the New Jerusalem?

4. Those who enter the New Jerusalem
   • Revelation 21:7. Who will inherit the water of life and the tree of life?
   • Revelation 21:27. What kind of people will enter the New Jerusalem?
   • Revelation 22:14. What gives them the right to enter the city and to the tree of life?
   • Revelation 22:17. Who is invited to receive the water of life?

Questions for discussion:

1) Compare the New Jerusalem with the Garden of Eden before Adam and Eve disobeyed God. What is similar? What is different?

2) The tree of life is in the New Jerusalem, and it was also in the Garden of Eden. Why is the tree of the knowledge of good an evil not in the New Jerusalem?

3) What is the meaning of the water of life flowing from the throne of God?

4) How does this lesson show the love and faithfulness of God?