

Christ in the Old Testament

Summer - Fall 2020

Prepared by Dan Hager

Class Objective: Build students' faith in Jesus by revealing Christ's supreme role in the Bible's overall story. Equip students to study the Old Testament in ways that are productive, enjoyable, and fruitful.

Making God Known

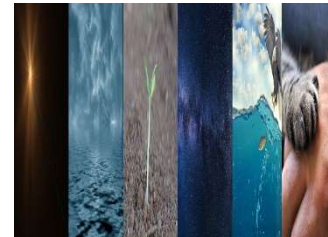
Key New Testament Passage: **John 1:1-18**

Focus Statement: Through Jesus, we can see and understand God more clearly as He is revealed to us in Scripture.

Function Statement: Dispel the false notion of a "God of the Old Testament" and "God of the New Testament" through showing the consistency between Jesus and God's character revealed in Scripture. Demonstrate Christ's role in Creation.

In the Beginning

The **first book of the Old Testament** is **Genesis**. In Hebrew, its title comes from the **first phrase, "In the beginning."** The word "**Genesis**" is the **Greek translation** of that Hebrew term. Read **Genesis 1:1-2:3**.



- **What is this passage about?**

- **What is special about the creation of man? What is man's purpose?**

If I were to ask, "**Where do you see Jesus in this passage?**" what would you respond? Some of us might simply say, "**I don't!**" Nowhere in this passage do the words "**Jesus**", "**Christ**", "**Son**" appear. Some of us might say, "**Well, in verse 26.**" That's where God said, "**Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.**" Jesus helps this make sense! One of the most popular Jewish interpretations of this is that He was speaking to the angels; but this is a way that the New Testament "shines a light" on what's going on.

Yet, even more than that, Christ played a critical role "in the beginning." Look at how Paul describes Christ's role in creation. Read **Colossians 1:15-23**.

- When Paul uses the term "**firstborn of creation**", he is **not** implying that **Jesus was created** – otherwise how could all things be created "**by him...through him and for him**"? **John 1**, which we will look at later, addresses this head on, too.

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- Instead “**firstborn of creation**” speaks to His **relationship to God** and the **rights and privileges** He enjoys because of that – despite being **fully human like us**. It’s another way of describing how He is **both Son of God** and **Son of Man**.

- What does it mean then that Jesus is “the image of the invisible God”?

- How do we see that in Genesis 1?

- What role does Paul say Jesus has in creation?

- According to Paul, why does it matter?

Paul’s point isn’t to give a **supernatural physics lesson**: it’s to **explain the preeminence of Christ**. That is meant to tell us the **role Christ should have** – in the **church** and in our **lives**. The Hebrews writer makes a similar point. Read **Hebrews 1:1-4**.

- Do you hear the similarities to what Paul said in Colossians 1?

<i>Hebrews</i>	<i>Colossians</i>
1:2 Son, appointed the heir of all things	1:15 firstborn of all creation
1:2 through whom also he created the world	1:16 all things created by, through, for him
1:3 radiance of His glory, exact imprint of his nature	1:15 image of the invisible God
1:3 he upholds the universe by the word of his power	1:17 in him all things hold together

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After that, the Hebrews writer draws on a lot of Old Testament passages – **II Samuel 7**, the **Greek translation of Deuteronomy 32**, and **several Psalms** – to describe Jesus' superiority.

- **Why do the New Testament writers emphasize so heavily Jesus' role in creation?**

Not only was Jesus present in creation, but He also brought to fulfillment what God began in creation. You see, "fulfillment" is about **bringing to completion**. It deals with more than just **closing the loop on predictions**. Jesus fulfilled God's purpose for humanity in His own life. He is fulfilling God's purpose for humanity through the church. Read **II Corinthians 4:1-6**.

- **What started in creation that is now being "fulfilled" by Jesus?**

We see all of these themes in the opening of John's gospel. Read **John 1:1-18**.

- **What does the opening of John's gospel account have in common with Genesis 1?**

As John shows us, what we saw begin in **Genesis 1** is only truly completed through Jesus – but that is because of how **sin entered the picture**, which we will get to soon.

- **So, to recap, where do we see Jesus in the biblical account of creation? Why does it matter?**

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Workers and Helpers

Focus Statement: Through Jesus, we can see and understand more clearly who God created us to be.

After describing how God created everything in Genesis 1, Genesis 2 goes back and puts greater focus on His creation of man in his own image. Read **Genesis 2:5-17**.



- **Where did the man's food come from?**

- **Why did man work?**

Man's sole commandment was not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil: he was to allow God to determine that, working with Him to exercise dominion and bear God's image in all of creation. As long as he did, God provided everything he needed for a fruitful, worthwhile life. To do otherwise was to bring death into God's very good creation. This speaks to the initial nature of God's good creation and what He intended for us. Read **John 4:31-38**.

- **What does Jesus say about food and work?**

- **What do we experience when we work with God?**

Jesus – “**the Word made flesh**”, “**firstborn of creation**”, and “**the image of the invisible God**” – embodies what our ideal was meant to be – and it isn't an existence of not working. We were meant to joyfully work with God as He provided for all of our needs. Sin messed this up: but, by God's grace, Jesus' death for us allows us to work with Him again. Read **Ephesians 2:1-10**.

- **What does it mean that we were “created in Christ Jesus for good works”?**

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This is part of why the apostles put so much emphasis on Christians not being idle but working hard. God's design is that we work and that our work brings glory to Him! Read **II Thessalonians 3:6-15** and **Colossians 3:22-4:1**.

- How is God's design— began in creation and restored to us through Christ – that we work different than worldly expectations?

But God's design isn't just about working: it's also about relying on God. Jesus makes this clear, too. Read **Matthew 6:25-34** and **Matthew 11:28-30**.

- How is God's design— began in creation and restored to us through Christ – that we rely on Him to meet our needs different than worldly expectations?

God not only created us to work: He created us for relationship. In **Genesis 1:27**, we're told "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." We see this happen in **Genesis 2:18-25**.



- How does our need for relationship reflect the image of God?

- What is different about the creation of woman?

Man and woman together project God's image, and together they are blessed to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and subdue it, and to have dominion. Yet, that's not all. Now that Jesus has come, something else about marriage has been revealed to us. Read **Ephesians 5:22-33**.

- How does marriage – beginning with Adam and Eve – refer to Christ and the church?

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When that isn't our experience, it is not a flaw with the institution but our own unwillingness to abide by God's design. Read **Matthew 19:1-12**.

- **Why does Jesus say people get divorced?**

- **How is this different living in God's design?**

When we understand God's design for humanity, it helps us see why some culturally acceptable patterns of behavior are wrong. It helps us understand how Jesus' work is not only about forgiving the sins we've already committed but bringing us back in line with God's design.

- **How might focusing on God's design for His creation change how we approach some issues?**

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Tempted

Focus Statement: In the midst of God's good creation, there was an enemy tempting humanity to sin. He seeks to lure us away from God's design just as he first did them.



In Genesis 1-2, we see God's original design for humanity. We were made in **God's image** (1:26). We were created to **exercise God's dominion** in the world, and He **blessed us to be fruitful** (1:27-28). We had **work to do**, and all our **needs were supplied** (1:29-30, 2:15). There was **no death**: everything even ate plants (1:30, 2:17)! God determined **right and wrong**, He gave us **marriage**, and we **lived in His presence** and **with one another without shame** (2:16-18, 24-25). It was "**very good**" (1:31).

What happened? It's not like that today. It wasn't like that **2,000 years ago** in **Jesus' day**. It wasn't even like that **3,500 years ago** in **Moses' day**, when the Spirit inspired him to write Genesis. Now, having enough food is a struggle and work can be miserable. Now, we can't trust people, we feel shame, and we die. What went wrong? Read **Genesis 3:1-6**.

○ **What indications do we have that this serpent isn't your average snake?**

○ **What about the serpent's temptation appealed to Eve?**

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It is so easy for us to look at this and question Eve: what was she thinking?! They had everything, and all God said was not to eat of that one tree. Yet, the way Eve was tempted speaks to how we all experience temptation. Read **I John 2:15-17**.

- **How do we see what John says here in Eve's temptation?**

We also see this when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. Read **Luke 4:1-12**.

- **How was Jesus' temptation similar?**

- **What was different in Jesus' temptation?**

When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, the effects are immediate. Read **Genesis 3:7-13**.

- **What do Adam and Eve experience within this passage as a result of their sin?**

When people reject God's way for sin, it changes whose image we bear. Listen to what Jesus said when many of the people wanted to accuse, arrest, and even kill Him over His relationship with God. Read **John 8:39-47**.

- **What does the devil desire, and how is it seen in people?**

- **How do we resist temptation?**

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Cursed

Focus Statement: Through Jesus, we can see God isn't the problem: sin is.

The effects of Adam and Eve's sin were immediate. Yet, even as awful as the loss of trust, the introduction of shame and fear, the hiding from God's presence, and the blaming of one another all were, the worst was yet to come. Read **Genesis 3:14-24**.



- What changed for humanity from life in God's "very good" creation to life after "the Fall"?

- What are things we struggle with today that resulted from "the Fall"?

The Apostle Paul made the relationship between sin and death clear. Read **Romans 5:12-14**.

- Why do we die? How does this relate to what God first told humanity about eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17)?

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Once humanity sinned, it got worse quickly. God warned Adam's firstborn son Cain that sin was "**crouching at the door**" before in jealousy he murdered his younger brother, Abel (**Genesis 4:7**). After Cain "**went away from the presence of the LORD**", his descendants grew more and more wicked. Read **Genesis 4:17-24** and **6:1-7**.

- **What sins characterized Lamech's and later humanity's overall wickedness?**

The net effect was that humanity didn't fill the world with God's image but with rampant wickedness. Read **Romans 1:18-32**.

- **Why did Paul say humanity is without excuse for our rampant sin?**

Our sin didn't just hurt us. Given that God created man to exercise dominion over creation, our sin brought a curse on all of creation. Read **Romans 8:18-25**.

- **How does Paul describe creation?**

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When we talk about sin, we aren't talking about arbitrary standards or subjective rules but departures from bearing God's image. When we encounter suffering and death, they aren't God's design for us but the consequence of the sin we brought into the world. So, when we see God fiercely punishing wrongdoing, we must recognize that sin and death are the baseline we have brought on ourselves and on everything He created. Yet, God always – in the Old and New Testament alike – shows His goodness in working with imperfect people who are willing to follow Him. In **Romans 11:22**, Paul describes it as the kindness and severity of God: **“severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in His kindness.”**

- Thinking back to Genesis 3, where did the clothes God provided Adam and Eve come from?

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Bruised

Focus Statement: Moments after the Fall, God set in motion His plan to redeem humanity from the curse of sin and death.



Let's look closer at the curse on the serpent in **Genesis 3:15**.

- **On the surface, what did this curse do to the serpent?**

- **Yet, was this a typical serpent?**

Consider again how John identifies the serpent in Revelation. Read **Revelation 12:1-17**.

- **At what point does John hear it proclaimed that "the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down"?**

On this side of the cross, we can see moments after the Fall, all the way back in **Genesis 3**, the first prophecy about Jesus!

- ***"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring."*** Doesn't Revelation 12 symbolically depict this? What do we know about the nature of Jesus' birth that fulfills this?
- ***"He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*** Jesus died – His heel was bruised – but in raising from the dead He crushed Satan's power.

Genesis 3:15 really represents the first proclamation of the gospel. Read **I Corinthians 15:1-28**.

- **What did Paul say the gospel is?**

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- In what way is Christ like Adam?

In fact, by destroying death, Jesus is destroying the power of our adversary, the devil. Read **Hebrews 2:14-18** and **I John 3:4-10**.

- How does Jesus undo the effects of the fall and fulfill the promise of **Genesis 3:15**?

Genesis 1-3 gives us the controlling narrative for the entire Bible. Everything comes back to God's design for humanity, our rebellion, and God working within our imperfection to provide us a way back to His presence.

- It's the story of **Noah and the ark**, where Seth's descendant obeyed God and came through the water into a new creation – which is itself a type of our own baptism (Genesis 6-8, I Peter 3:18-22). God blessed Noah to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Genesis 9:1).
- It's the story of **Israel's exodus**, where through the Ten Plagues God essentially uncreated Egypt before bringing Israel through the Red Sea, the wilderness and eventually into the Promised Land – where they could be fruitful, multiply, and shine God's light to the world. Like the cherubim guarding the way to the tree of life, the **ark of the covenant** was decorated with cherubim. Like God once walked in the garden in the cool of the day, the **tabernacle** and **later the temple** provided a physical representation of God's presence with the people.

Yet, only with Jesus does this narrative find fulfillment. Otherwise, in every instance **sin and death** still plagued humanity.

- Noah – a “**man of the soil**” – became drunk and Ham dishonored him (Genesis 9:20-25).
- “**God was not pleased**” with most of Israel, overthrowing them in the wilderness because of how they desired evil, committed idolatry, engaged in sexual immorality, and put the Lord to the test (I Corinthians 10:1-11). The ark was lost. The temple destroyed.

But not with Jesus. He defeated sin and death. In Him, we get to experience new creation. And as the Old Testament shows us, God brought it about in the most unlikely of ways.

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Believing God

Focus Statement: God worked through the most unlikely of people to bring Jesus into the world to accomplish His purpose. Their only qualification was that they trusted Him.

The Apostle John devotes much of his gospel account to Jesus' interaction with His apostles on the night He was betrayed. In response to Philip's request to "show us the Father", Jesus explained something critical about His relationship with the Father. Read **John 14:8-11**.

- **How did Jesus say we could "see the Father"?**

Philip requested a *theophany* – God revealing Himself to humans. Though originally part of God's design for us, sin caused our departure "from the presence of the LORD" (Gen. 3:22-24, 4:16). As a result, such appearances became rare and remarkable as seen throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, marking out critical junctures in God's plan to rescue humanity from sin and death. Read **Genesis 12:1-9**.

- **Why did the LORD appear to Abram?**

- **What had Abram done for God to choose him?**

- **What did Abram do when God chose him?**

- **What did God promise to do if Abram went?**

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Abram was far from perfect. No sooner had he responded to God's call, then he sojourned in Egypt due to a famine and hid his relationship with his wife Sarai for fear the Egyptians would kill him. Yet, he believed in God, and that meant everything. Read **Genesis 15:1-6**.

- What did the LORD add to Abram's understanding of His promise in making this covenant?

- What does it mean that God counted Abram's belief "to him as righteousness"?

On the basis of Abram's belief, God entered a **covenant** with him in **Genesis 15**. Such legal agreements were common between individuals (e.g. contracts) and nations (e.g. treaties), especially for a more powerful entity to pledge protection to a less powerful one. While covenants typically specify obligations between both parties, God counted Abram's belief as satisfying his part. God identified Himself and Abram presented a sacrifice to Him (15:7-11). Then in a dream, God foretold Israel's future affliction and rescue (which would have been current events when God inspired Moses to write this) and before making His promise. "**On that day, the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your offspring I give this land...'**" (15:18).

Abram and Sarai didn't fully comprehend this and took it upon themselves to fulfill God's part of the covenant. Read **Genesis 16:1-6**.

- Even without a written law, how did Abram's and Sarai's action here go against God's design? What echoes from the Fall can we hear?

God appeared to Abram again years later, changing his name to Abraham, repeating His promises, commanding **circumcision**, and specifying Isaac as his offspring. Read **Genesis 17:1-27**.

- Did circumcision **make Abraham right before God**?

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The story of Abraham forms a critical foundation to understanding much of the history of his descendants, the people of Israel. It introduces important concepts like righteousness, covenant, and circumcision that come up often in the New Testament.

Yet, to read it only as an ancient people's history or explanation of their customs is to miss the point. Why did God appear to Abraham? Why did He make a "great nation" of His descendants? Much more than geography or genealogy, God in His grace chose to work through Abraham's family to rescue humanity from sin and death. This isn't fulfilled without Jesus. Consider the ultimate fulfillment these New Testament passages attribute to God's promises to Abraham.

- The Promised Land (**Hebrews 11:8-16**) _____

- The blessing (**Galatians 3:7-14**) _____

- The offspring (**Galatians 3:15-29**) _____

Abraham's story isn't just about Abraham or even Israel. Read **Romans 4:1-25**.

- For whose sake was the story of Abraham's faith written, and why?

- Why does it matter that we see Jesus in the story of Abraham?

When we understand Abraham's role in God's rescue plan and how it culminates in Jesus, even the most difficult of Old Testament stories can "show us the Father." Read **Genesis 22:1-19**.

- What about this story do we find troubling?

At the time Moses was inspired to write Genesis, Israel was preparing to enter Canaan, where child sacrifice was practiced (Leviticus 20:1-5, Deuteronomy 12:29-31). During the reign of Judah's king Josiah, we are told that one his reforms included defiling "**Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech**" (II Kings 23:10). The Valley of Hinnom was located just south of Jerusalem.

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- Where did Abraham take Isaac (Gen. 22:2)? _____

- Where did Solomon build the temple (II Chr. 3:1)? _____

Perhaps Moses was contrasting contemporary pagan practice with the one True God. Yet, that's not all! Remember, Jesus told Philip, "**Whoever has seen me has seen the Father**" (John 14:9).

- What Father allowed His Son to be sacrificed in Jerusalem (John 3:16)? _____

Even without being a "Messianic prophecy", Jesus opens our understanding to who God is and what His purposes are throughout the Law, Prophets, and Psalms. Read **Hebrews 11:17-19**.

- What did the Hebrews writer add to explain Abraham's motivation in offering Isaac?

- Having now seen Jesus, how can we know God better through this story?

Jesus changes everything, including the significance of the patriarch Abraham, his son Isaac, and his grandson Jacob. Just look at how Jesus addressed the Sadducees, who didn't believe in the resurrection and only acknowledged the Law as Scripture. Read **Matthew 22:29-33**.

- How did Jesus say this quote from Exodus 3:6 in the Law demonstrated resurrection?

While Paul made a point of showing in **Romans 4** that Abraham's standing with God was based on his faith, James used this story to show what faith is really all about. Read **James 2:14-26**.

- By using Abraham's example, what do Paul and James together tell us about the nature of genuine faith in Jesus?

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Flesh and Promise

Focus Statement: God accomplishes His purpose in ways we wouldn't expect, and through Jesus, we see that He always keeps His promises.

As the patriarch of the people of Israel, Abraham loomed large in both Israel's history and in the genealogy of Jesus. Read **Matthew 1:1, 17**.

- **Why does it matter that Jesus descended from Abraham?**

While proselytes were welcomed to Judaism – as evidenced by Jesus' own family tree including Rahab and Ruth – heritage was extremely important to the Jewish people. For some of them, it had even become too important. Read **Matthew 3:7-10**.

- **What issue was John trying to address in the Pharisees and Sadducees attitude with respect to being "children of Abraham"?**

Our fallen world wants to exalt itself and make its own determinations of good and evil. This is done through accumulation of wealth, through physical dominance, through lineage and inheritance. Even in a democratic system like the U.S., like at how much an influence money, experience, and name recognition have in our elections! This is no different than the ancient world. God has a very different picture, though. Read **Romans 9:6-33**.

- **How were God's choices different than those the world might expect?**

- **Why did God make the choices that He did? How should we understand them?**

- **How does Jesus help us understand those instances of God's wrath on display?**

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We see this over and over throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. God worked through family turmoil and world events to exalt Abraham's great-grandson Joseph over his older brothers and Egypt: **"God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today"** (Gen. 50:20). In fact, we see this in the blessings Israel, Abraham's grandson and Isaac's younger son, gave to his twelve sons before his death. Read **Genesis 49:8-12**.

- **What role did Israel say the descendants of his fourth born, Judah, would play?**

When God led Israel out of captivity to the Promised Land, He did not choose them because they were **"more in number than any other people"**, because they had superior power or might, or even because they were more righteous but **"because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers"** (Deut. 7:7-8, 8:17, 9:4). When Israel's first king, the Benjamite Saul, was unfaithful and had the kingdom taken from him, it was given to David from the tribe of Judah, who was Jesse's youngest son when anointed king (I Sam. 16:11-13). Likewise, Solomon was nowhere near next in line after David, yet God made him king (I Kgs. 1). This is a consistent part of God's character, and we see it in the New Testament, too.

- _____ were **"uneducated, common men"** who spoke boldly for Jesus (Acts 4:13).
- _____ was **"unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me is not in vain"** (I Cor. 15:9-10). Despite being advanced in Judaism, God sent him to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:13-17).
- **"For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were _____ according to worldly standards, not many were _____, not many were of _____.** But God chose what is _____ in the world to shame the _____; God chose what is _____ in the world to shame the _____; God chose what is _____ in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no _____ might boast in the presence of God" (I Cor. 1:26-29).

Yet, many in Israel missed this about Him. Rather than recognize God's grace and purpose in His promises to Abraham, they made it about their heritage and worthiness. Had they really been seeking to know God, they never would have missed this: it was clearly on display during the life of Abraham himself. Read **Genesis 14:17-24** and **Hebrews 6:13-7:22**.

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- Who was Mechizedek, and what does he have to do with Jesus?

- How can Jesus be a “high priest” if He isn’t a Levite?

- What tribe was Jesus physically descended from, and what was Israel’s blessing on them?

In fact, **Psalm 110**, a psalm of David quoted by Jesus, Peter, Paul, and the Hebrews writer as being about the Messiah, incorporates both priesthood and reign. This was what God wanted for man all along: to bear His image before creation (priest) and exercise dominion (kingdom).

While many in Israel limited their understanding of Abraham to one of physical descent and inheritance, God was doing something much, much bigger. Read **Matthew 8:5-13**.

- What was significant about the centurion’s statement?

- What was significant about Jesus’ response?

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The Apostle Paul also developed these themes. Read **Galatians 4:21-5:6**.

- In Paul's example, who is "the son of the slave" and who is "the son of the free"?

- What does this mean for how Christians are to live?

Teaching in the temple treasury, Jesus was confronted by this in His own ministry, even among those who believed in Him. Read **John 8:31-59**.

- Why were they upset by His teaching? On what did they base their relationship with God?

- How were they embodying "the Fall"? How was Jesus calling them back to God's design?

By invoking "I am", Jesus not only recalled Abraham but another pivotal person to Israel: **Moses**, with whom we will begin with our next lesson.