



The Central Part of the Bible

Colossians 1:15-20; 3:15-17

This week we will focus on the center of the story of the Bible. Think of a wagon wheel. There is a hub at the center of the wheel with spokes going from the center that hold the rim of the wheel to the hub. Last week we looked at the beginning and ending of the story of the Bible. Like a hub of a wagon wheel, this central part of the Bible holds everything in the Bible together.

If you really want to know about God, then you need to understand the book God gave to His people: the Bible. Not only did God provide the Bible so that people might know about Him, He provided the Bible so that people might have a personal relationship with Him. That is also our goal when we study the Bible. We seek a close relationship with God. Knowing the center of the story of the Bible will help us to know what is central to our relationship with God.

For several weeks we've been studying how to understand the Bible the way the people who wrote it understood it. I've borrowed a lot of the ideas from my former professor, Dr. Greg Beale. By understanding the Bible this way, we can see how the different parts of the Bible fit together. Carefully studying how the New Testament writers interpreted the Old Testament guides us to a better understanding the Bible as a whole.

In this week's lesson we will review what we've learned, and then we will "drill down" through everything and get to the central part of the story of the Bible.

So, this week we will study:

- How the Bible Interprets the Bible.
- What is the Central Part of the Complete Story of the Bible?
- How Can You Know If the Center of God's Story Is the Center of Your Story?

How the Bible Interprets the Bible

Last week we focused on the first three chapters of Genesis and the last chapter and a half of Revelation.

Throughout the Bible the sequence of events in the story of Adam and Eve are repeated. This pattern was repeated four times in the Bible. First, there was chaos. Next, there was a new creation. After that, God established a covenant with Adam in Genesis 1:28-30. Then, sin occurred. Because of Adam and Eve's sin the covenant with God was broken. There was a hope that things would turn out differently, and God would draw near to His people. But the story got off track

before the story gets to that point (Genesis 1:1-3:24). We catch little glimpses of what could have happened, but because of sin, the story never reaches the goal or goal God had prepared for humanity.

Second, the chaos of a great flood of Noah's time removed sinful humanity (Genesis 6:11-13). God made a covenant with Noah that was very similar to the one He had made with Adam (Genesis 9:1-7). Evil is wiped out. The world can begin again. Then, Noah and his sons sinned (Genesis 9:21,22,25). Once again sin stopped humanity from reaching the goal God had set forward in His covenant.

Third, the captivity of the Jewish people in Egypt (Exodus 2:23-25) and the plagues that are sent

upon the Egyptians created chaos (Exodus 7:14-12:42). God then commissioned the people of Israel by giving the Law to Moses on the top of Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:1- 20:21). But the hope of a new creation was lost when the people sinned by worshipping a golden calf (Exodus 32:1-35). When the people enter the Promised Land it is sort of a New Creation, but sin soon creeps back into the story, and whatever hope existed fades away.

Fourth, chaos came in the form of captivity in Babylon. This captivity was the result of Israel's sin (1 Chronicles 9:1). Some of the captivity took place within the land of Israel, when Babylon ruled over the land of Israel. It looked like the promised blessings of God would never take place because no one could overcome their own sin and obey Him. The story is obviously unfinished. There is never any sense of a new creation.

God gave many opportunities for people to prove that they could obey God: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the nation of Israel. They all sinned and failed to follow their covenant established with God. This pattern is found in our own lives as well. We also fail to obey God. This means we also continue in this pattern of sin. Like them, we are caught in sin and can't get free from it.

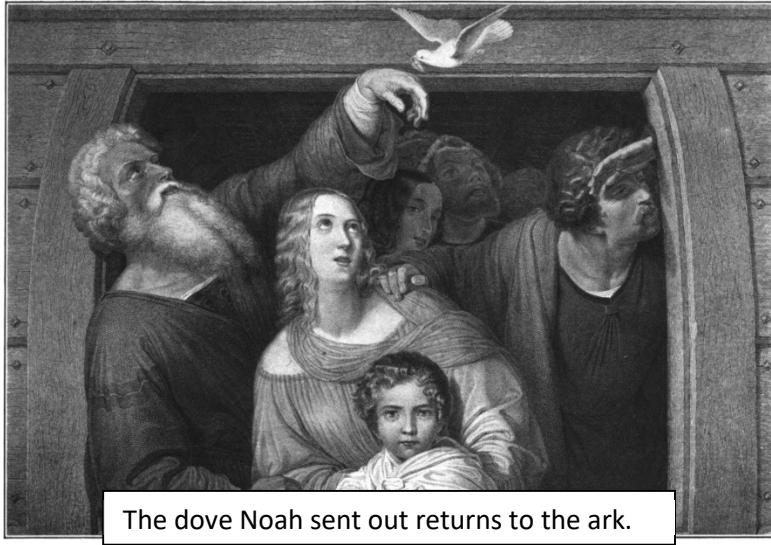
What is the Central Part of the Complete Story of the Bible?

If you're like my own children, you may realize that there are two basic answers to most of the questions that are asked in a Bible Study. For my children, when their minds drifted during Sunday School, and they were asked a question, they could always count on these two answers: "Jesus" and "the Bible." So, when you look at the question three lines above, "What is the central part of the complete story of the Bible?" You already know the answer is "Jesus." Yes, Jesus' coming is the central part of the story of the Bible. Let's look at what this means for us.

When Jesus came, He was given the same basic assignment as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the nation of Israel, to be the priest and king of the earth. Jesus succeeded where they failed.

The failures of sinful human beings continued throughout the Bible, but the promises of God also kept coming. If it hadn't been for God's persistent promises all hope would have vanished.

Then God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:1 & 14). He did what no other man had been able to do. Every other person or group of people who had attempted to follow God's covenant failed because of sin. Jesus had no sin (Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; 1Peter 2:22). Because He was without sin, He was able to succeed where all others had failed.



When God created humanity, He had a plan for humans to rule over angels (1Corinthians 6:3). Because Christ is higher than the angels (Hebrews 1:4) and those who believe in Jesus Christ are being recreated in His image (Colossians 3:10). They too will rule over angels in the last days.

Almost every event and every teaching in the Bible is directly connected to this central part of the whole story of the Bible.

Two key words, “inaugurated” and “consummated,” will help us to understand how Jesus Christ is the central part of the complete story of the Bible. Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and God the Father will rule over the new creation. Jesus currently sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 8:1; 12:2). I use the word “inaugurated” because other Christians use it. Think of a king being inaugurated. It becomes official that he is now the king, at the inauguration. Until then, something might have gone wrong, and someone else might have become king. Once he is inaugurated, he will forever be known as the man who is or was king.

Jesus was inaugurated as the King of the New Creation when He rose from the grave. This is stated several different ways in the scripture. When Jesus ascended to Heaven, He "sat down at the right hand of God the Father (Matthew 26:64; Mark 16:19; Luke 22:69; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 10:12). This concept of Jesus being inaugurated in His role as King of the New Creation fits in quite well with the way Jesus refers to His death on the cross (John 12:23; 13:31; 17:1). As Jesus said, “the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified (John 2:4; 5:25&28; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23 & 27; 13:1; 16:25; 17:1). Jesus’ death and resurrection was the time of His inauguration as King of the new creation.

The second word is “consummated.” This refers to the time when Jesus will return to earth. The New Creation began at the “inauguration” but the old creation continued to exist alongside the new creation. The “consummation” will be the time when the Old Creation will be removed or destroyed. Only the New Creation will exist. The Old Creation will be gone. Those who are in Christ, are of the New Creation. They will not be destroyed by the destruction of the Old Creation. But those who are not in Christ will pass away with the Old Creation.

Two other terms are often used to describe the “inauguration” of Christ as the King of the New Creation and the “consummation” of the new creation when the old creation is removed. Sometimes this is called the “already/not yet”. Kingdom that Jesus described as “already” spiritually present in every believer’s heart. The “not yet” is not always physically present in this world of the Old Creation. This is demonstrated by how God will sometimes heal people miraculously. This is part of the coming Kingdom where there will be no tears or suffering. When a miracle occurs, we could say that the New Creation is breaking through into the Old Creation. But then, at other times God doesn’t send healing, as when God did not heal Paul of his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7). In the Old Creation sin is still present, but the New Creation sometimes breaks into the Old Creation, for example, when a miracle occurs. The New Creation is here spiritually, in its fullness. If we are born again, we really are made new in Christ. But the transformation will not always show in our physical bodies. The world around us remains unchanged. When Christ returns all evil, in us and in the world, will be replaced by a new resurrection body and a new physical universe. We will never again experience temptation to sin. This was the goal God had planned since the time of Adam.

How Can You Know If the Center of God’s Story Is the Center of Your Story?

When the story is a romance, the wedding is usually the climax of the story. If the story is a murder mystery, the confession of the murderer is often the climax of the story. All the prophets and the law pointed toward Jesus Christ. His coming to earth, especially His death on the cross paying the price for all sin, and His resurrection showing victory over death, proved He was the climax to the story of the Bible. But how can Jesus Christ be the center of the story of my life and your life?

At the time of our conversion, we are made spiritually new in Christ. However, our physical existence is still bound to an evil, sinful creation. I remember hearing a preacher say that Jesus ascended to Heaven and we are waiting for His return, and we are living in this world in the “mean time.” We are waiting for the transformation that Jesus Christ has accomplished to be made complete. It’s like we have a foot in both creations. Physically we are still totally part of this world. Spiritually we are totally part of the world that has yet to come and will only come in its fullness when Jesus

returns. Christians have faced severe persecution for centuries. In fact, Paul wrote that “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12). So don’t be alarmed if you are criticized or ridiculed for your faith.

Jesus told Nicodemus that He must be born again to see the Kingdom of God. Being born again is the central part of a person’s life, when the old sinful life passes away (John 3:3). Just as the universe will one day be destroyed and a new creation will take its place, our old way of living that was according to the sinful ways of this world, must pass away. When old habits raise their heads, they must be put to death (Colossians 3:5). Are you experiencing this?

For some, like myself, coming to Jesus Christ happened at a very young age, and it is difficult to remember anything before believing in Jesus Christ. For many others, they may have been raised to believe in Jesus Christ, but they wandered away. Rejection of Christ may not have been a conscious decision, but the truth is, they turned from Christ to sin. Still others, may have never known of Jesus Christ until they came to Him, desperate for a Savior from sin.

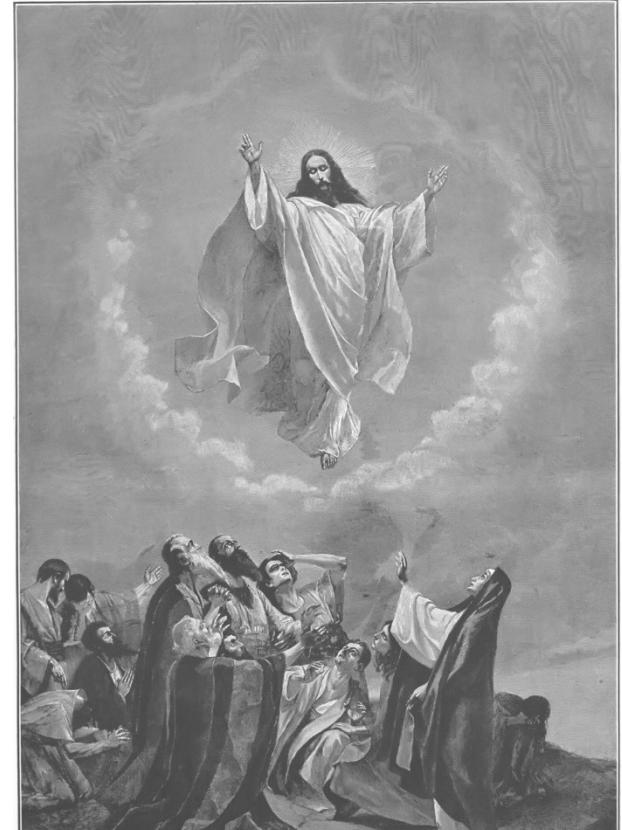
Whatever your personal experience in coming to Jesus Christ you must know Him as the one who will forever “rule in your heart” (Colossians 3:15). He will help by “nailing to the cross” all your guilt and shame (Colossians 2:14). By putting your faith in Jesus Christ you are “united with him in a death like his” and, “we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (Romans 6:5).

We are living in the time between the “inauguration” of Jesus Christ as the King of the New Creation, and the time of His return and the “consummation” of His Kingdom. We may be prone to doubt, and even to sin. We may wonder if we will ever be strong enough to endure and be faithful to Christ. But everyone whom God has called has this assurance: “he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). It is not by our own actions that we are saved (Colossians 2:16), it by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:9). He will do it. Not us.

Again, and again, we will fail like Adam and every other human being. But God will not stop drawing to Himself all believers. If you are not sure whether you believe then “draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8). Pray to Him with all your heart and ask Him for His deliverance.

If you are resting in the peace that passes understanding (Philippians 4:7). Rejoice, He has set you free from the power of sin and death (Romans 6:3; 8:2). Study His wonderful, marvelous Word, the Bible. Seek to understand the depths of His love He has revealed in its pages. Know that He is with you now and forever. Think of all Jesus has done for you, and give Him thanks.

Take a look at Colossians 1:15-20 and Colossians 3:15-17 and see if you can find a way to draw closer to Christ by thanking Him and praising Him for all He has done for you (both passages are written out on the next page). Pray that God will show you something new that you have never understood before about the love that Jesus has for you, as you pray over these two passages of scripture.



An artist's conception of Jesus' ascension.

In Christ,

Chap. Haslett

Colossians 1:15–20

He is the **image** of the **invisible** God, the **firstborn** of all **creation**. For by him all **things** were **created**, in **heaven** and on **earth**, **visible** and **invisible**, whether **thrones** or **dominions** or **rulers** or **authorities**—all **things** were **created** through him and for him. And he is before all **things**, and in him all **things hold together**. And he is the **head** of the **body**, the **church**. He is the **beginning**, the **firstborn** from the **dead**, that in **everything** he might be **preeminent**. For in him all the **fullness** of God was **pleased to dwell**, and through him to **reconcile** to himself all **things**, whether on **earth** or in **heaven**, **making peace** by the **blood** of his **cross**. ([ESV](#))

U L B E L I C N O C E R I K
B L O O D C H E A V E N G D
S E D F H O D A E H S N F E
G W Y U L T M R N E I I G P
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I C R E A T I O N S M E E E
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T C K I L H G B I M O H B S
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U H Y P E A C E L B I S I V
R M C M M F D T K Y R S L T

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Colossians 3:15–17

E M A N S I N G I N G H
L D D T P S O N G S C E
U H M E I J E S U S M A
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And let the **peace of Christ rule** in your **hearts**, to which **indeed** you were **called** in one **body**. And be **thankful**. Let the **word of Christ dwell** in you **richly**, teaching and **admonishing** one another in all **wisdom**, singing **psalms** and **hymns** and **spiritual songs**, with **thankfulness** in your **hearts** to God. And whatever you do, in **word or deed**, do **everything** in the **name** of the **Lord Jesus**, giving **thanks** to God the **Father** through him.

([ESV](#))

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This was followed by a new creation that came through Jesus Christ (resulting from Jesus' life, death, and resurrection). Jesus became the "last Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45) who began a new creation by His rule in Heaven. In the future, Jesus will bring His rule to earth.

What was God's plan for humanity? Where do we learn about it in the Bible?

Why does God refer to Israel as the Garden of Eden (Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 36:35; Joel 2:3)? Why does the extravagant Temple prophesied by Ezekiel never come into existence (Ezekiel 40-48)? What is the meaning of God's promises that there will be king in the line of David forever (2Chronicles 21:7; 33:7; Psalm 18:50; Jeremiah 17:5; Ezekiel 37:25)? Why does Jeremiah 17:5 say that Jerusalem is a city that "shall be inhabited forever"?

If God kept trying to find the right person or people to fulfill His requirement to obey His covenant, and all of them sinned and failed, why did God continue to promise that something more permanent was going to happen? Why did God speak of eternity when the requirements to earn the right to become eternal were never met by any human being?