



Will You Trust God in the ‘Latter Days’?

Occasionally, God “pulls back the curtain” to reveal to His people a small part of what He is doing, and why He is doing it. God provides the words of prophecy so that His believers can better understand Him and grow to trust Him more.

Today we're going to search the Old Testament for the phrase "latter days" or "last days". A message about the latter days runs throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. We will look at four places in the Old Testament where this phrase is used, and we will see how these verses are interpreted by the New Testament writers.

We will see that the people who wrote the Bible often quoted earlier parts of the Bible that already been written, provided an interpretation, and then added a new revelation. By quoting scripture they showed that the new words of God's revelation were rooted in the foundation of what God had already revealed. They were also showing that God hadn't finished revealing more details of His plans for His people.

God didn't tell His people everything all at once. Sometimes He gave them many years to let the meaning of His words sink into their minds. One generation of believers shared what God said with the following generation. Then, God would reveal a little more of His plan. The people who believed in God studied the new words to understand how they fit in with the older information. They wove a fabric of God's revelation, putting new scripture with old scripture so that we can identify a phrase that makes a "trail" we can follow through the Bible.

We will be looking at the first time the phrase, “latter days” was used in the Bible, Genesis 49:1, and see that God revealed that He had a plan for His chosen people. We will also look briefly at Numbers 23 & 24 to see how God revealed more details about this plan. In Isaiah 2:2, and Micah 4:1, we will see that God used this phrase again to reveal more information about this plan. And in Acts 2, we will see how Peter preached that Jesus’ death and resurrection showed that this plan was being fulfilled. To put it another way:

- God's plan for His people (Genesis 49:1, Numbers 23&24)
 - More details about God's plan (Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1)
 - God makes His plan a reality (Acts 2)

God's plan for His people (Genesis 49:1, Numbers 23&24)

The very first time this phrase appears in the Bible is Genesis 49:1. If you look for the phrase in an English translation, you won't find the phrase "the latter days." However, if you look at the original Hebrew you will find the phrase. Just before he died Jacob blessed his sons. Everyone involved was now living in Egypt. Jacob called his sons together. He told them that he was doing this so "that I may tell you what shall happen to you in the" latter days (Genesis 49:1, ESV). I underlined the words "latter days" because I changed the translation. I changed it to "latter days" because it is word-for-word the same phrase in Hebrew that we find translated "latter days" in the other passages we will study here (Numbers 24:14; Isaiah 2:2; and Micah 4:1). I will try to show that this passage is a prophecy about the "latter days". I think you will agree with me that this is a prophecy about Judah and his descendants:

⁸ "Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
 your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
 your father's sons shall bow down before you.
⁹ Judah is a lion's cub;
 from the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He stooped down; he crouched as a lion
 and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?
¹⁰ The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
 nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;
 and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.
¹¹ Binding his foal to the vine
 and his donkey's colt to the choice vine,
he has washed his garments in wine
 and his vesture in the blood of grapes.
¹² His eyes are darker than wine,
 and his teeth whiter than milk.

Genesis 49:8-12 has quite a bit to tell us about "the latter days." We are told that Judah's brothers will bow down to him (Genesis 49:8). In fact, Judah became far larger than any of the other tribes. When Moses took a census, during the time the Jewish people wandered in the wilderness, Judah was much larger than any other tribe (Numbers 1:27; 26:22). In Revelation 5:5 Jesus is called, "the lion of Judah," which is quoting that phrase from Genesis 49:6. We are also told that "the peoples" will obey him (Genesis 49:10). The word "peoples" refers to all different kinds of people, not just the Jewish people. In other words, people from other nations will be ruled by Judah. They will obey him. The word "scepter" refers to a king. This repeats the idea that in the "latter days" a descendant of Judah will be a great king who will rule over other nations.

In Genesis 49:11 we find a description of a future time when harvests will be very fruitful. Jacob says that in "the latter days" when a king from the tribe of Judah rules over all of Israel and other nations the land of Israel will have incredibly good harvests. The curse God put on the ground at the time of Adam will be reversed (Genesis 3:17&18). Some of this was fulfilled when David was king, but a greater fulfillment will come through Jesus Christ when He will rule as the King of Kings. The description of tying a donkey to a grape vine provides a picture of such an abundance of grapes that a donkey will be tied to enormous grape vines, and allowed to eat the grapes until it doesn't want any more. Remember this is spoken by Jacob to his sons, who have moved to Egypt due to a terrible famine in the land God would give them as their own. In later generations the Jewish people would hear these words and marvel that God promised such bountiful harvests in the dry, desert-like land of Israel.

There are three basic types of fulfillment of a prophecy. (1) the prophecy is fulfilled in the time period that it is given, or at least before Christ's birth. (2) the prophecy is fulfilled by the birth, ministry, or resurrection of Jesus Christ. And, (3) the prophecy is fulfilled in the second coming of Christ. Most of the prophecies about Judah are fulfilled as #2 and #3 fulfillments, but King David fulfills part of the prophecy as a #1 type of fulfillment. Usually, "latter days" is understood to refer to either #2 or #3 types of fulfillment, but not #1.

If you were only looking at this passage as a description of what is going to happen to Judah, these words wouldn't describe many events that happened in Judah's lifetime. However, if you interpret them as a prophecy concerning Judah's offspring, especially his descendant, Jesus Christ, then you will understand that this is a prophecy.

Let's take this a step farther. If you understand this as a description of the world that God has in store for those who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior, then believers have a lot of assurance from God. There will be a great abundance of everything a person needs to have a good life. The entire world will be at peace. All of the things that the ancient Israelites feared most will no longer exist as a threat. Likewise, all of the things we today fear the most, God will remove, and they will no longer be a threat.

While there are a lot of details about the prophecies of the world to come that we can't understand, these words from Genesis 49 provide great assurance. When a promise of abundant harvests was given to people barely surviving a famine, these were welcome words. We may not be living in the midst of a famine, but these promises from God assure those who are in Christ that God will provide for their every need. Not only will God provide the minimum of what is needed, He will provide an abundance. So, hold on to God's promises. He will get you through the seasons when you lack many things that make life good. God has a plan, if you are in Christ. If you don't know Christ, turn to Him now, and ask Him to save you so that you can be assured of His promises.

You might remember that some of the phrases used here are repeated in Numbers 23&24 when Balaam makes a prophecy about Israel. In fact, the phrase in Hebrew, "the latter days" is repeated in Numbers 24:14.

More details about God's plan ([Isaiah 2:2](#); [Micah 4:1](#))

A search of the Bible shows that the phrase "latter days" also occurs in Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1. Take a look at Isaiah 2:2,

² It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of **the house of the Lord**
shall be established as **the highest of the mountains**,
and shall be **lifted up above the hills**;
and all the nations shall flow to it,

Notice once again the phrase "latter days" (underlined). I put some other phrases in bold so you can see them easily as I refer to them. Another important phrase is the "house of the Lord", or the Temple, will have "all the nations flow to it." That seems clear, people from all over the world will go to the Temple of the one, true God. The part that may seem confusing is that it is on a mountain that is the "highest of the mountains" and is "lifted above the hills." That can be understood literally to mean that God will raise Mount Zion, the hill where Jerusalem and the Temple were located, so that it will be higher than any other mountain on earth. Another possible interpretation is that it will be a place with the "highest" authority in all the earth. The expression, "the highest authority" doesn't necessarily mean that something is physically of a higher elevation, only that it has more authority than anything else. In fact, both could be meant, so that the new Temple will be both at the highest elevation on earth, and have more authority than any other authority on earth. Of the two meanings, however, authority is most important. The new Temple could be of a lower elevation than another mountain and still have people from all over the earth going to it. However, it could not be of anything other than the highest authority to have people from all over the earth going to it.

Isaiah is drawing out the meaning of Genesis 49:1, when he uses this phrase "latter days". As we learned in Genesis 49, in the "latter days" a king will rise from the tribe of Judah who will rule all of Israel and other nations. In Isaiah 2:3-4, we learn more about "the latter days."

³ and many peoples shall come, and say:
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."
For **out of Zion shall go forth the law**,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
⁴ He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;
and they shall beat their **swords into plowshares**,
and their **spears into pruning hooks**;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.

Not only will this future king “judge between the nations,” (vs. 4), but this king from Judah is identified as making judgments according to “the law and the word of the Lord.” (vs. 3). There will be peace between “the nations” and “peoples.” “Swords” will be beaten “into plowshares,” and “spears into pruning hooks.” There will be no war between nations (vs. 4).

If you look at Micah 4:1 and the verses that follow, you will find that most of the words used by Isaiah are repeated by Micah. (Notice that Micah added to what was said). He mentioned that there will be a time of abundant harvests in the “latter days.” We saw that already in Genesis 49:11&12, and that message is repeated here in Micah 4:4. This is not so much of a new revelation from God as it is an interpretation by Micah, bringing the prophecy of Isaiah 2:2-4 together with the prophecy of Genesis 49:11&12.

Let's tie everything together that we've said so far. Isaiah 2:2 focuses on a king who will rule from Jerusalem. There will be a Temple in Jerusalem, and people from all over the world will go there to worship God. In Micah 4:1 we find this prophecy repeated. When we turned to Genesis 49:1 we found that in the blessing given by Jacob to his sons, especially his promise to Judah, we find many of the same promises. A time will come when God will send a great king who will rule the world. Some of these prophecies can be taken symbolically, or spiritually, or both. For example, Jesus said that His body was the Temple (John 2:21). And Paul said that the body of believers is a temple (1Corinthians 6:19). So, the Temple in the new creation might be a very different kind of Temple than what had been in Jerusalem in Isaiah's lifetime. In fact, in Revelation 21:22 John says that in the new creation there will be no temple in Jerusalem because God Himself will live among His people. So, the whole earth, or even all of the new creation, will be the Temple where God's presence dwells.

What does the information we've considered here tell us about how to live today? All of the things that give us difficulty on this earth will not continue after the “latter days.” True believers in Christ will survive the destruction of this creation, but evil, sin, and even temptation will be removed so that they will not continue into the new creation.

God makes His plan a reality (Acts 2)

So, when are the “latter days”? Peter preached a sermon in Acts 2, on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came in power, He actually uses the phrase “latter days” in his sermon.

¹⁷ “And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;
¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.
¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;
²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,

Isaiah 2:2-4	Micah 4:1-4
<p>² It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, ³ and many peoples shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.</p>	<p>4 It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, ² and many nations shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ³ He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide disputes for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; ⁴ but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.</p>

before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' (Acts 2:17-21)

Peter was interpreting the prophecy of Joel 2 in light of Isaiah 2:2. He wove together portions of both passages of prophecy. From Joel 2:28 Peter quotes, "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." Then, from Isaiah 2:2, he brings the prophecy that in the "last days" "all the nations shall flow" to Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost Jewish people from all over the Mediterranean world came to Jerusalem. As Peter saw the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the believers, he realized that the two prophecies were connected and that both told parts of what was going to happen.

Joel's prophecy had spoken only of the Jewish people. Isaiah's prophecy had spoken about how all the nations would come to the Temple in Jerusalem. Peter realized that the Holy Spirit was being poured out on all the Jewish people who came to believe in Jesus Christ. At that point they were gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. However, at the conclusion of the Feast, many of them would return to their homes which were scattered throughout the Mediterranean world. Peter must have remembered Jesus' command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel (Matthew 28:19&20). This was one way that the Holy Spirit was going to make this happen. The people who had just recognized Jesus as the Messiah would bring this message with them. Not only would they bring the message, they would bring the indwelling Holy Spirit. So, not only were people from all over the world coming to the physical Temple in Jerusalem. Those people who believed in Jesus Christ, were leaving Jerusalem as living Temples, filled with the presence of God, the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:21-22). So, the spiritual, living Temple, was going to spread out into the world. And, by the way, if you believe in Christ, you are a living stone in that Temple (1Peter 2:5).

Jesus has come. The Holy Spirit brought the message and presence of Jesus Christ throughout the world. The prophecies were fulfilled. There is something tricky going on here that I need to point out. Throughout the New Testament there is a sense that the "new creation" has already begun, but it has not yet fully arrived. Sometimes this is called the "already/not yet" Kingdom of God. It has truly arrived. But it has not yet taken full control. When it does take full control the old creation will be wiped away, and only the new creation will remain. We can say that the "new life" Christians have through Christ, is fully present spiritually. However, it will not be fully present physically until Christ returns, and believers have their new resurrection bodies (see 1Corinthians 15). Until then, we will wrestle with sin, but when Jesus returns sin will be removed completely.

For myself this explains so much about the struggles Christians experience. The Holy Spirit is working in each believer, and making them like Christ. However, until believers have their new resurrection bodies they will struggle with sin. New life in Christ is real, but what is new is the believer's heart. Sometimes God will cause a believer to be healed physically, but not always. Believers can still cut a finger or stub a toe. Believers can still experience physical death. Believers can still lapse into acts of sin. The promise Christ has given is that one day these struggles will be over, when the Kingdom has fully come, when Christ returns.

At times most believers grow weary of this struggle and feel like giving up. These promises assure believers of both good and bad realities. The bad reality is that the struggle will never end until Christ returns. We should not expect it to go away until then. On the other hand, the good reality is that the change of the believer's heart, including an attitude of love for God and others, is real. There is a genuine, real change that has taken place in the believer's heart and soul. It is not something The believer has done. It is what God has done in the heart of the believer.

Believers have a taste of heaven. They taste heaven when they read the promises in the Bible. They taste heaven when they feel the love of other Christians. They taste heaven when they enjoy worshipping God and praying to Him. But the fullness of Heaven has not yet arrived. But it will.

Until Christ returns, all Christians must persevere. We are given the promise that it will be worth it in the "latter days."

Next week we will continue our study of the phrase “latter days” or “last days” in the New Testament. You can look at three passages ahead of time: Acts 2:17; 2Timothy 3:1; Hebrews 1:2; and James 5:3.

Isaiah 2:1–9

The **word** that **Isaiah** the son of **Amoz** saw **concerning Judah** and **Jerusalem**. It shall **come** to pass in the **latter days** that the **mountain** of the **house** of the **LORD** shall be **established** as the **highest** of the **mountains**, and shall be **lifted** up above the **hills**; and all the **nations** shall **flow** to it, and **many peoples** shall **come**, and say: “**Come**, let us go up to the **mountain** of the **LORD**, to the **house** of the God of **Jacob**, that he may teach us his ways and that we may **walk** in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the **word** of the **LORD** from **Jerusalem**. He shall judge between the **nations**, and shall decide disputes for **many peoples**; and they shall beat their **swords** into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; **nation** shall not **lift** up **sword** against **nation**, neither shall they learn war anymore. O **house** of **Jacob**, **come**, let us **walk** in the light of the **LORD**. For you have rejected your **people**, the **house** of **Jacob**, because they are full of things from the east and of fortune-tellers like the Philistines, and they strike **hands** with the children of foreigners. Their **land** is **filled** with silver and gold, and **there** is no end to their treasures; their **land** is **filled** with horses, and **there** is no end to their chariots. Their **land** is **filled** with idols; they bow down to the work of their **hands**, to what their own fingers have made. So man is humbled, and each one is brought low— do not forgive them!

([ESV](#))

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How Is Christ's Coming Related to the "Latter Days"?

Imagine you've come to my office to talk. Of course, we can't do this right now, but let's use our imaginations a little.

You ask, "When is it going to end?" I assume you mean, "When are the Covid restrictions going to end, so we can have chapel services again?"

You explain, you've been reading the Bible. In fact, you read last week's lesson about the "latter days." So, you say, "The Bible talks about the 'latter days,' so when will they begin?"

I tell you that I know the answer to this question. I can give you the exact day.

If you've studied the Bible very much, my answer might alarm you. Jesus said, "Concerning that day or hour, no one knows" (Matthew 24:36; see also Mark 13:32). If Jesus said no one knows the day or the hour, how can Chaplain Haslett claim to know it?

I explain. I know it because we're talking about two different things. The words "latter days" can refer to the second coming of Christ, and that's what Jesus was talking about in Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32. But that's the final, ending of the "latter days." What I know is the beginning of the "latter days". I don't know their ending. Just look above, the question was, 'When will they begin?"

Let's suppose you ask, "Okay, then, tell me, when do the "latter days" begin?"

That's my first point in this lesson. This week we will look at the phrase "latter days" as it is found in the New Testament. In this lesson we will be looking to the Bible to learn:

- When do the latter days begin? (Acts 2:17)
 - When we get near to the end of the latter days, what should we do? (2 Timothy 3:1)
 - What will every person do at the conclusion of the latter days? (James 5:3)
 - Tell me again, when did the latter days begin? (Hebrews 1:2)

I have a suggestion. You might try reading the rest of this lesson one section at a time. You could read one section, put it down, pray about it, and think about it. Then, later, pick it back up and read some more. Some of this material is “heavy” and it may take some time to absorb its meaning. Try not to give up if it is heavy. God’s Word has a way of blessing us as we struggle to understand it.

When do the latter days begin? (Acts 2:17)

We might ask, "When do the latter days begin, and why should it matter to me?"

On the Day of Pentecost Jesus sent the Holy Spirit in power, to dwell with those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Apostle Peter preached a long sermon. I won't go through the entire sermon, but I will draw your attention to Peter's discussion about a prophecy from the prophet, Joel.

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ "And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;
¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,

blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;
²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' ¹

Peter preached these words to the Jewish people who were gathered from all over the Mediterranean world. They came to the Temple in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. Peter begins by referring to "the last days", which is another way of saying, "latter days." "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh," (Acts 2:17) Peter says. These words come directly from the prophecy in Joel, as you can see below.

²⁸ "And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.

²⁹ Even on the male and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.

³⁰ "And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. ³² And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls. ²

Peter says, "This is what was uttered through the prophet Joel." (Acts 2:16). Notice that in Joel's prophecy, and in Peter's quotation of the prophecy, we read, that there will be miraculous signs in the heavens and on the earth (Acts 2:19, Joel 2:30). These signs had not taken place, but Peter says Joel's prophecy had been fulfilled: "This is what was uttered through the prophet Joel." Why did Peter say that Joel's words had taken place?

The "latter days" speak of the time when Jesus would come, both his first and second coming. Do you remember that I had you ask the question when the "latter days" would begin? Throughout Jesus ministry He said that His hour had not yet come (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20). The hour that was coming was His death on the cross (John 12:23&27; 13:1; 17:1), and His resurrection. Jesus' death and resurrection mark the beginning of the new age when all things will become new (2 Corinthians 5:17; Revelation 21:5). You could say that they mark the beginning of the "latter days". **So, the latter days begin with Jesus' death and resurrection and will end when He returns.** That's my understanding.

¹ The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Ac 2:14–21). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

² The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Joe 2:28–32). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

We know when Jesus came. When He was born in Bethlehem. But, He came into His eternal Kingdom when He died on the cross and rose again. We know about both times of Jesus coming. However, the time of His return is known only to God the Father (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32).

You might ask, "Why does it matter for me?" Let's look at this another way. Jesus' life and ministry all led up to His death on the cross and His resurrection. When Jesus rose from the dead He became the first of those who will rise from the dead. A multitude of people will believe in Him, and because of Him they will be raised from the dead as well. The prophecies about the latter days are God's prediction that all this will take place.

When we get near to the end of the latter days, what should we do? (2Timothy 3:1)

"The Bible says that near the very end of the latter days things will get much worse. How can we be prepared for those hard times?"

Another New Testament passage that uses the phrase "latter days" or "last days" is found in 2Timothy 3:1. I will include the verses that follow because it gives us a sense of the context of the phrase the Apostle Paul is using in his letter to the young pastor, Timothy:

3 But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. ³

You might ask, "So is Paul talking about the beginning of the 'latter days' or the 'end of the latter days,' or both?" My answer would be that Paul is talking about the entire period of the "latter days." So, he is referring to the beginning, middle, and end of the "latter days."

If we understand that Jesus' death and resurrection started a new creation, we might wonder why evil still continues. If we are living in the new creation then why don't we see new creation everywhere we look? Paul is saying that we should not be surprised. As the Kingdom of Christ is growing stronger in this evil, fallen world of the old creation, the Kingdom of Satan is also growing at the same time. Not surprisingly, there is tension between the Kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of Satan. Both are hard at work.

As Christians we have the promise that Christ has already won. He rose from the grave. Already, we are made new, spiritually. We can have victory over sin as we grow to be more and more like Jesus.

At the same time, Satan is hard at work. He can't defeat those who are in Christ Jesus, but He can make believers lives very difficult. He can destroy everyone who is not in Christ. That is why we must be witnesses for Christ, so that those Christ has called might hear that Christ has died for them. We present that witness with our words and actions. We do the best job when we simply live the kind of life that shows Christ has transformed our thoughts and actions. Sometimes we don't actually have to say very much for others to see Christ at work in our lives.

So, when we see evil at work we should continue to put our hope and trust in Jesus Christ. He has won already when He rose from the dead. We now struggle against sin, but He is victorious. All who are not in Christ will be destroyed by evil. So, keep your spiritual eyes on Jesus Christ and follow the course He has marked out for you (Hebrews 12:1&2). The time will come when the struggle will end.

What will every person do at the conclusion of the latter days? (James 5:3)



This is an artist's conception of the day of Pentecost. Notice the tongues of fire over the believer's heads.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (2 Ti 3:1–5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

We might ask, "Doesn't the Bible say something about every person will have to give an account of his or her life to God at the final judgement? How can I be ready for that?"

At the conclusion of the "latter days," or after the destruction of the old creation, everyone will be judged by God. Read what James has to say:

5 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. ² Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. ³ Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. ⁴ Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. ⁵ You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you. ⁴

As the end of the "latter days" approaches those who know of Christ but refuse to turn to Him should reconsider. Consider the "rich" (James 5:1). For those who put their trust in the riches of this world, and the fine clothes they wear, all these things will become "rotted" and "moth-eaten" (James 5:2). Instead of helping you face judgement, at the conclusion of the "last days," your treasures will become "evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire" (James 5:3).

What about those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior? How will they do when God judges them?

In the year 368 a pastor named Basil, who became known as Basil the Great, preached to the rich people in his flock. He begged with them to release their food to the poor who were starving. Many of them did what Basil asked. Basil sold land that he had inherited, and used the money to feed the poor. He said this: "If you are reduced to your last loaf of bread and a beggar appears at your door, then take that loaf from your closet and lift your hands to Heaven, and say this prayer: 'O Lord, I have but this one loaf, which you see before you: Hunger lies in wait for me, but I worship your commandments more than all other things, and therefore this little I have I give to my brother, who suffers from hunger.' "

As Christians we should care for those who are in need. Christ forgives the sins of those who trust in Him (Ephesians 1:7). However, we should never use Christ's promise of forgiveness as an excuse to do what we know is sinful (Romans 6:1&2). Instead, we should show the love of Christ to everyone (2 Corinthians 5:14).

If we are not showing the love of Christ to others, we must ask ourselves if we have really given our life to Christ or not. If we have not given our life to Christ, then we must pray to Him. Once we have committed our lives to Christ, then we must seek to serve Him in every way that we can. It should not be a burden, rather an act of celebration that gives the believer joy.

A lot of people have asked how they can be sure that they are saved. The best way is to take a look at your actions. Do they demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is transforming your soul? Is there evidence that you really do love Jesus Christ in word and deed? I don't mean that you never stumble. Perhaps there were times when you did something for someone, and you know in your heart that it was not characteristic of you. The big test is showing forgiveness to someone who has treated you badly. This evidence of Christ at work in you. Consider this as evidence that you belong to Jesus, and He is living in you. Your walk with Christ is evidence that He lives in your heart.

Tell me again, when did the latter days begin? (Hebrews 1:2)

We might ask, "When do the latter days begin? Are we living in the 'latter days'?"

At the very beginning of the book of Hebrews we read:

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. ⁵

The writer of Hebrews identifies the days when Christ was on earth as the "last days", or the "latter days." He goes on to explain that Jesus Christ, before being born as a baby in Bethlehem, was the Creator of the universe. He is the "exact imprint" of God's nature. He holds the universe together. At the end His earthly ministry He made "purification for sins" (Hebrews 1:3). We know this as His death on the cross, when He paid the price of sin. The word used in the

⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Jas 5:1–6). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Heb 1:1–4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Bible for explaining how Christ paid our debt is that we are “redeemed” by Christ (Galatians 3:13; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:15).

Throughout the rest of the book of Hebrews we are told of many different ways that Jesus fulfilled the patterns of God’s revelation. These patterns are called “shadows” or “types” (Romans 5:14; Hebrews 8:5; 10:1). Jesus was a more perfect priest than the priests of the Old Testament. He was without sin (Hebrews 4:15). In the Old Testament Israelites gave animal sacrifices day after day. Jesus the perfect sacrifice, offered once for all (Hebrews 9:26). So, these “shadows” foretold what Jesus Christ would do.

When did the latter days begin? When Jesus came and revealed Himself as the one who fulfilled every description of God’s plan for humanity and creation. The book of Hebrews is a stunning description of how God revealed His plans in the Old Testament and fulfilled every one of those plans in the New Testament.

Are we living in the latter days? Yes.

What's left to say about the “latter days”?

If you were in my office, and we were talking face to face, now would be the time to consider what you want to do with what we’ve been looking at here. Do you want to live for Christ? Do you want to receive His gift of new life, eternal life?

If you’ve made that commitment before, then it may be time to recommit your life to Christ. If you’ve never committed your life to Christ, then this can be the time that you do.

Ask Jesus Christ to forgive your sins. Every Christian should do this on a regular basis. Ask Him to change your heart. The change will be real, but it will be incomplete until the end of the “latter days”, and you are in Heaven, or Christ has returned. Be ready to study the Bible faithfully so that God can continue to teach you how to live for Christ. Be committed to spending time learning from other Christians. In normal times this means coming to church services regularly. At this time, it will mean staying in touch with the chaplain, or your pastor back home. It can mean having a conversation with another believer where you live.

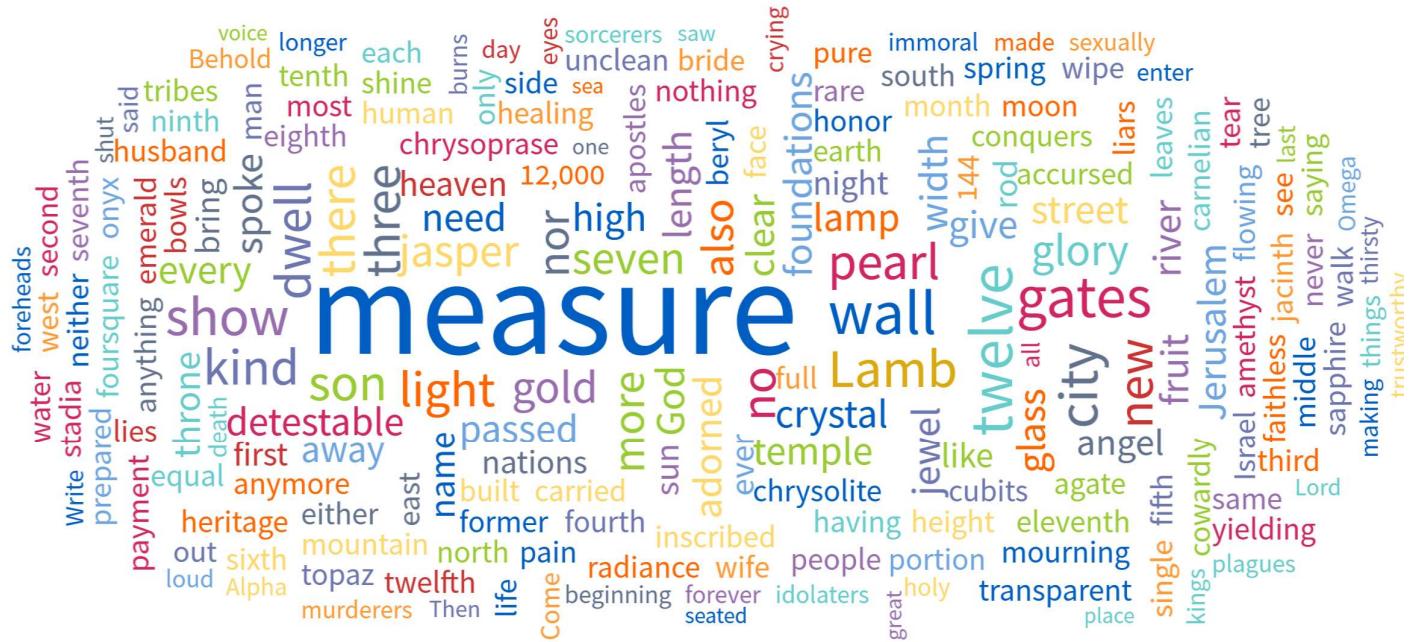
Expect God to be at work. Expect to struggle but know that Jesus Christ has already won. If you remain in Him, He will give you victory. So, stay faithful to Jesus. He will be faithful to you.

Acts 2:14–20

But **Peter**, standing with the **eleven**, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of **Judea** and all who **dwell** in **Jerusalem**, let this be known to you, and give ear to my **words**. For these **people** are not **drunk**, as you **suppose**, since it is **only** the **third hour** of the day. But this is what was **uttered** through the **prophet Joel**: “‘And in the **last** days it shall be, God declares, that I will **pour** out my **Spirit** on all **flesh**, and your sons and your daughters shall **prophesy**, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall **dream dreams**; even on my male **servants** and female **servants** in those days I will **pour** out my **Spirit**, and they shall **prophesy**. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, **blood**, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to **blood**, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

([ESV](#))

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The Bookends of the Bible

Genesis 1:1-3:24 and Revelation 21:1-22:5

What is the best way to understand the Bible? How can we decide which parts of the Bible are most important? How can we know how the different parts of the Bible fit together? If we understand the answers to these questions, we will understand the Bible better, and we will be more confident about what it tells us about God.

Many methods for interpreting the Bible have been developed by well-intentioned human beings, who were not inspired by God. But it would be better to use a method that comes directly from the Bible. We can study the methods used by the people who wrote down the words of the Bible. These methods become clearer when we see how the writers of New Testament interpreted the Old Testament.

Over the past few weeks, we've been studying how the writers of the New Testament interpreted the Old Testament. Not only were these methods of interpretation used by the writers of the New Testament, but they were used by Jesus Himself (Luke 24:25-27). We've identified a pattern of "Creation, Fall, and New Creation" that is followed in the story Adam, Noah, and Abraham and his descendants in the nation of Israel. We've also traced the use of the phrase "latter days" as it was used in the Old Testament and the New Testament. So, we've been working at developing our understanding of how the writers of the New Testament interpreted the Old Testament. What I am going to suggest for this study is a way to sharpen our focus and pull these different ideas together. In this lesson we will look at the beginning and the ending of the Bible. You might call these two parts of the Bible the "bookends" of God's revelation.

If you think of the entire Bible as one, very long, complex story, you could say the story begins in Genesis 1:1-3:24 and works its way to the climax in Revelation 21:1-22:5. Every detail of every story in the Bible could be understood as an attempt to reach the climax. Most attempts to reach the climax were failures, and the people involved were never able to reach that climax. However, Jesus Christ did succeed where others failed.

Instead of beginning at the start of the story, we will begin at the end of the story. The end will help us to better understand where everything is heading, and how it's all going to turn out.

We are going to put a lot of information together here in this one lesson. My prayer is that this study will help you to see the story of the Bible as a whole, so that you will be better able to understand how the different parts of the Bible fit into the one, complete story.

In this lesson we will study:

1. The Ending of the Story, Revelation 21:1-22:5
2. The Beginning of the Story, Genesis 1:1-3:24
3. Where do each of us fit into this story?

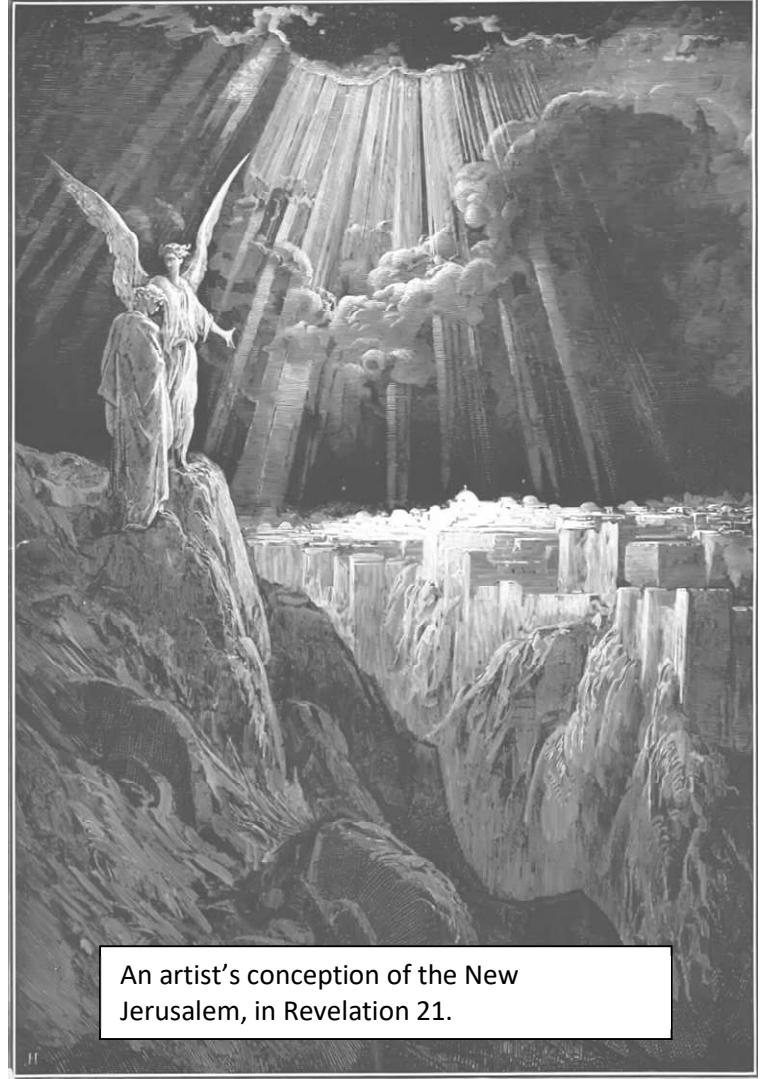
The Ending of the Story, Revelation 21:1-22:5

I like to grow a garden every year. I plant vegetables and also flowers. When I plant a section of beans, for example, I mark where the bean seeds were planted. I don't mark them as "bean seeds," even though that is exactly what they are when I plant them. I mark them as "beans," because that is what they will produce.

When God put Adam in the Garden of Eden, He had a specific goal in mind. We read about that goal here, at the end of the book of Revelation. Like the label for the "beans" in my garden, I believe we are reading about God's plan for the human race that He had from the time of creation.

There is a lot to see in this description of the end of the present creation and the full-blown reality of the new creation. There is no temple. Why? Because in the new Jerusalem (of the new creation) "its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb" (Revelation 21:22). Remember that in the Old Testament God's presence dwelled in the temple. In the new creation God will dwell among His people (Revelation 21:3). God will no longer need a building or tent to house His presence.

God's people will "see His face" (Revelation 22:4). Moses couldn't look at God's face or he would have died (Exodus 33:20). In the new creation God's people will be able to look directly at God. Why? God's people will be without sin, so they will be able to look at God's face and not die. How do we know they will be without sin? First, there will be no more tears, death, or suffering (Revelation 21:4). Because there is no sin in the new creation these things will no longer exist. Second, there will be nothing that is "accursed" (Revelation 22:3). When Adam sinned, all human beings descended from him were cursed with sin. In the new creation all of God's people will be without sin. They will no longer be "accursed". As a result, those who believe in Christ will become the bride who is without any stain of sin (Romans 5:19 – "made righteous"; Revelation 19:8 – "it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen bright and pure" – Romans 5:19 and Revelation 19:8 use different words to say the same thing).



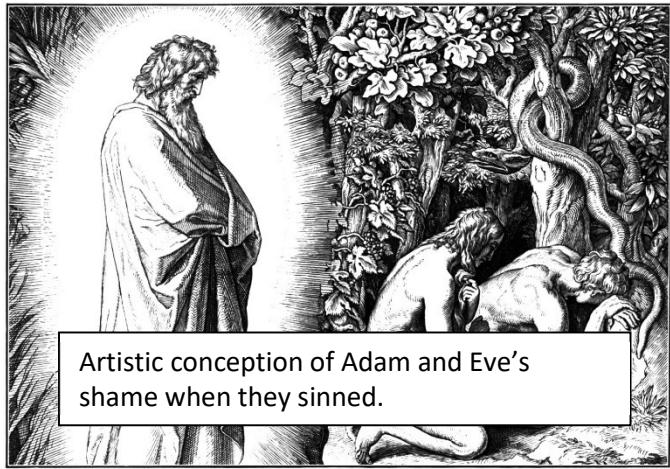
An artist's conception of the New Jerusalem, in Revelation 21.

So, what more can we learn about what was God trying to accomplish when He created Adam?

The Beginning of the Story, Genesis 1:1-3:24

To read all of Genesis chapters 1, 2, and 3 would take quite a bit of time. These chapters of Genesis tell the story of how God created Adam and Eve. We read about how Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God.

By reading Revelation chapters 21 and 22 I believe we gain an understanding of what God's plan was for Adam and Eve. God didn't plan on Adam spending eternity in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 1:28&29 we read that Adam was supposed to fill the earth. Fill the earth with what? Fill the earth with people who would be Adam's descendants who would glorify God in all that they did. If Adam and His descendants had obeyed this covenant with God, then God would have brought His presence to the earth, as described in Revelation 21:1-3. But Adam failed. He disobeyed God. So, God had to find another person, or people, who would do what Adam failed to do. God gave this opportunity to Noah, Abraham, the nation of Israel, King David and his heirs. They all failed. When we can read about what will happen because of the work of Christ on the cross, we better understand what God had intended for the human race, from the very beginning.



spoke about Adam as if Adam was a real person in history (Luke 3:8; Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 5:22, 45; 1 Timothy 2:13, 14; Jude 1:14). For that reason alone we should take the story of Adam very seriously.

God intended to have fellowship with the human beings He created. He intended to be with them, just as He was with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8). The sound of God approaching was so familiar to Adam and Eve that they immediately recognized the sound of God coming to visit with them.

What had they done wrong? Adam was put in the Garden of Eden to "work it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). Those two words, "work" and "keep" can be translated differently. The first word can also be translated as "serve". In fact, this word "serve" is sometimes used to describe the work of worshipping God in the Temple (2 Samuel 5:18; 2 Kings 10:19, 21, 22, 23; Psalm 97:7; Isaiah 19:21, 23). The other word can be translated as "watch" or "guard". This word is used to describe the work of the priests who guarded the Temple to make sure no one would pollute the holiness of the Temple (Numbers 3:8, 10; 18:7; 1 Samuel 2:9; 2 Kings 12:9; Nehemiah 13:22). The same word can also be translated as "observing" God's Law, which means to obey God's Law (Exodus 12:17, 24; Leviticus 19:37; 26:3; Deuteronomy 5:12; 16:1; Nehemiah 10:29; Psalm 106:3; 119:34; Ezekiel 43:11).

The two words I just mentioned in Genesis 2:15 indicate that Adam was a priest and that the Garden of Eden was a Temple. There are several things that indicate that the Garden of Eden was a Temple. There was a river that flowed out of the Garden of Eden, that became the source for four rivers (Genesis 2:10&11). In the book of Ezekiel, the Temple of the new creation is described as being the source of a river (Ezekiel 47:1). And, in the book of Revelation, Jerusalem, where God will dwell with His people, is described as the source of a river, whose waters will heal the nations (Revelation 22:1&2). So, a Temple of God is often described as the source of a river in the Bible. This indicates that Eden then, was a Temple where the Adam and Eve were to meet with the presence of God. There are other indications that Eden was a Temple, in another lesson we will look at those reasons in greater detail.

So, all of this indicates that Adam was a priest of the Temple of the Garden of Eden. He was given the assignment to serve God as a priest in this Temple. Part of that job was to guard and protect its holiness.

The serpent, who was Satan, invaded the Temple, which was the Garden of Eden. Since Adam was a priest, assigned to protect the holiness of the Temple, what should he have done when this intruder entered the Temple? He should have driven the serpent out of the Garden or killed it. Priests were assigned to guard the temple and even to kill people who desecrated the Temple (Numbers 3:8, 10; 18:7; 1 Samuel 2:9; 2 Kings 12:9; Nehemiah 13:22). Did Adam do this? No. Adam failed to do the job God had assigned to him.

God's plan to "promote" Adam and extend his domain of responsibility to the whole world (Genesis 1:28&29), was stopped because of sin. Satan entered the Garden of Eden. He tempted Adam and Eve. And, they sinned. Instead of defeating Satan, Adam wallowed Satan to invade the Garden of Eden, Adam was defeated by Satan.

God gave Adam and Eve a promise. He said that the "seed of the woman" would crush the head of the offspring of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). This is the first prophecy that Christ would later come to save human beings from their sin. Jesus is the offspring, or seed, of Eve. When He died and rose again, He crushed the head of Satan, and defeated Satan once and for all.

Where do each of us fit into this story?

If God is tugging at your heart to believe, don't turn away from the truth of God's Word. If you sense that God is calling you to believe in Him, you will feel an urgent need to believe the story of the Bible. That doesn't necessarily mean that you won't struggle with any part of the story. But you will find yourself drawn to Christ. You will want to experience His love and forgiveness. You will have an overwhelming desire to be with Him for all eternity.

If you respond to Christ's call, you will be part of this story. You will be among those who will live forever with him. If you have this desire in your heart, then pray and ask Christ to forgive your sins. His death on the cross paid the price of your sin. Confess your sins. Ask Him to forgive you for your sins.

The evidence of your belief in Christ is visible in a changed heart. Do you have love for your brothers and sisters in Christ? Do you have a desire to draw others to experience the love of Christ for them? Do you find yourself feeling guilty over things that didn't used to bother your conscience? All of these changes are indications that God is changing your heart.

If you are not sure that your heart has been changed by Christ, then now is the time to come to Christ. Confess your sin. Ask Jesus to forgive those sins. Then, watch for the changes He will make in your heart and life.

I have presented a "fast-forward" version of the entire Bible, by using the first and last books, with just a little bit of the information about Jesus in between. I hope you feel drawn to be part of this story, not just now but for all of eternity. God's plan for His people is wonderful. It is a great assurance for those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. My hope and prayer is that you will share that sense of wonder and assurance.

Genesis 1:1–3:24

In the beginning, God created the **heavens** and the **earth**. The **earth** was without **form** and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the **light** was good. And God separated the **light** from the darkness. God called the **light** Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. And God called the expanse **Heaven**. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, “Let the waters under the **heavens** be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land **Earth**, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. And God said, “Let the **earth** sprout vegetation, **plants** yielding seed, and **fruit trees** bearing **fruit** in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the **earth**.” And it was so. The **earth** brought forth vegetation, **plants** yielding seed according to their own **kinds**, and **trees** bearing **fruit** in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. And God said, “Let there be **lights** in the expanse of the **heavens** to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, and let them be **lights** in the expanse of the **heavens** to give light upon the **earth**.” And it was so. And God made the two great **lights**—the greater **light** to rule the day and the lesser **light** to rule the night—and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the **heavens** to give light on the **earth**, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the **light** from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the **earth** across the expanse of the **heavens**.” So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their **kinds**, and every winged **bird** according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the **earth**.” And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. And God said, “Let the **earth** bring forth living creatures according to their **kinds**—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the **earth** according to their **kinds**.” And it was so. And God made the **beasts** of the **earth** according to their **kinds** and the livestock according to their **kinds**, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the **heavens** and over the livestock and over all the **earth** and over every creeping thing that creeps on the **earth**.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the **earth** and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the **heavens** and over every living thing that moves on the **earth**.” And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the **earth**, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the **earth** and to every bird of the **heavens** and to everything that creeps on the **earth**, everything that has the **breath** of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the **heavens** and the **earth** were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. These are the generations of the **heavens** and the **earth** when they were created, in the day that the **LORD** God made the **earth** and the **heavens**. When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small **plant** of the field had yet sprung up—for the **LORD** God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—then the **LORD** God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the **breath** of life, and the man became a living creature. And the **LORD** God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the **LORD** God made to spring up every **tree** that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The **tree** of life was in the midst of the garden, and the **tree** of the knowledge of good and evil. A **river** flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four **rivers**. The name of the first is the Pison. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is the Gihon. It is the one that flowed around the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is the Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. The **LORD** God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the **LORD** God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every **tree** of the garden, but of the **tree** of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Then the **LORD** God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” Now out of the ground the **LORD** God had formed every **beast** of the field and every bird of the **heavens** and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the **heavens** and to every **beast** of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. So the **LORD** God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its **place** with flesh. And the rib that the **LORD** God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Now the serpent was more crafty than any other **beast** of the field that the **LORD** God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any **tree** in the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the **fruit** of the **trees** in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the **fruit** of the **tree** that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the **tree** was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the **tree** was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its **fruit** and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the **LORD** God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the **LORD** God among the **trees** of the garden. But the **LORD** God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the **tree** of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me **fruit** of the **tree**, and I ate.” Then the **LORD** God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” The **LORD** God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all **beasts** of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall

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bruise his heel." 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." And to Adam he **said**, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the **tree** of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the **plants** of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." The man **called** his wife's **name** Eve, because she was the mother of all **living**. And the **LORD** God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. Then the **LORD** God **said**, "Behold, the man has become **like** one of us in **knowing** good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the **tree** of life and eat, and **live** forever—" therefore the **LORD** God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he **placed** the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the **tree** of life. ([ESV](#)) Exported from [Logos Bible Software](#)

Revelation 21:1–22:5

Then I saw a new **heaven** and a new **earth**, for the **first heaven** and the **first earth** had passed **away**, and the sea was no **more**. And I saw the holy **city**, new Jerusalem, **coming** down out of **heaven** from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the **throne** saying, "Behold, the **dwelling** place of God is with man. He will **dwell** with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe **away** every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no **more**, neither shall **there** be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed **away**." And he who was seated on the

throne **said**, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he **said**, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he **said** to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will **give** from the spring of the water of **life** without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death." Then came one of the **seven angels** who had the **seven bowls** full of the **seven** last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will **show** you the Bride, the wife of the **Lamb**." And he carried me **away** in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and **showed** me the holy **city** Jerusalem **coming** down out of **heaven** from God, having the **glory** of God, its radiance **like** a most rare jewel, **like** a **jasper**, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall, with twelve **gates**, and at the **gates** twelve **angels**, and on the **gates** the **names** of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— on the east **three gates**, on the north **three gates**, on the south **three gates**, and on the west **three gates**. And the wall of the **city** had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve **names** of the twelve apostles of the **Lamb**. And the one who spoke with me had a **measuring rod** of **gold** to **measure** the **city** and its **gates** and walls. The **city** lies foursquare, its length the same as its width. And he **measured** the **city** with his rod, 12,000 stadia. Its length and width and height are equal. He also **measured** its wall, 144 cubits by human **measurement**, which is also an **angel's measurement**. The wall was built of **jasper**, while the **city** was pure **gold**, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the **city** were adorned with every **kind** of jewel. The first was **jasper**, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve **gates** were twelve **pearls**, each of the **gates** made of a single **pearl**, and the street of the **city** was pure **gold**, like transparent glass. And I saw no temple in the **city**, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the **Lamb**. And the **city** has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the **glory** of God **gives** it **light**, and its lamp is the **Lamb**. By its **light** will

the nations walk, and the kings of the **earth** will bring their **glory** into it, and its **gates** will never be shut by day—and **there** will be no night **there**. They will bring into it the **glory** and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the **Lamb's book of life**. Then the **angel showed** me the river of the water of **life**, bright as crystal, flowing from the **throne** of God and of the **Lamb** through the middle of the street of the **city**; also, on either side of the river, the tree of **life** with its twelve **kinds** of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will **there** be anything accursed, but the **throne** of God and of the **Lamb** will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his **name** will be on their foreheads. And night will be no **more**. They will need no **light** of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their **light**, and they will reign forever and ever. ([ESV](#)) Exorted from [Logos Bible Software](#)



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.

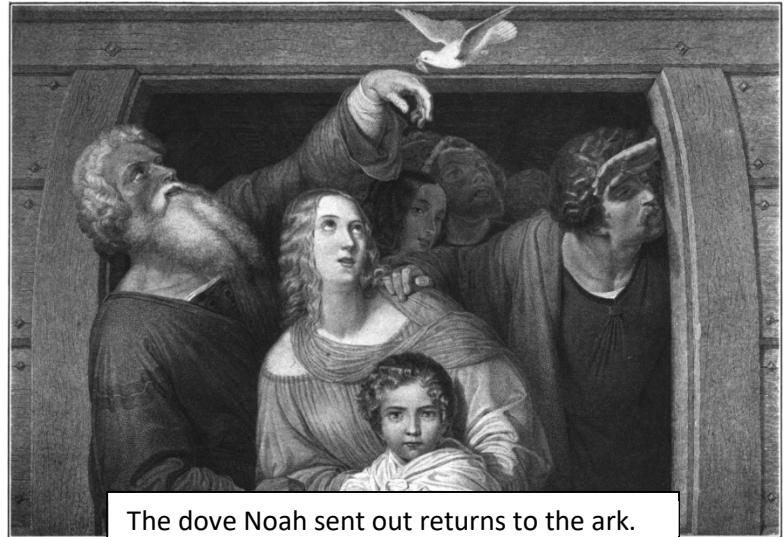
The failures of sinful human beings continued throughout the Bible, but the promises of God also kept coming. If it hadn't been for God's persistent promises all hope would have vanished.

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 dove Noah sent out returns to the ark.

the

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?

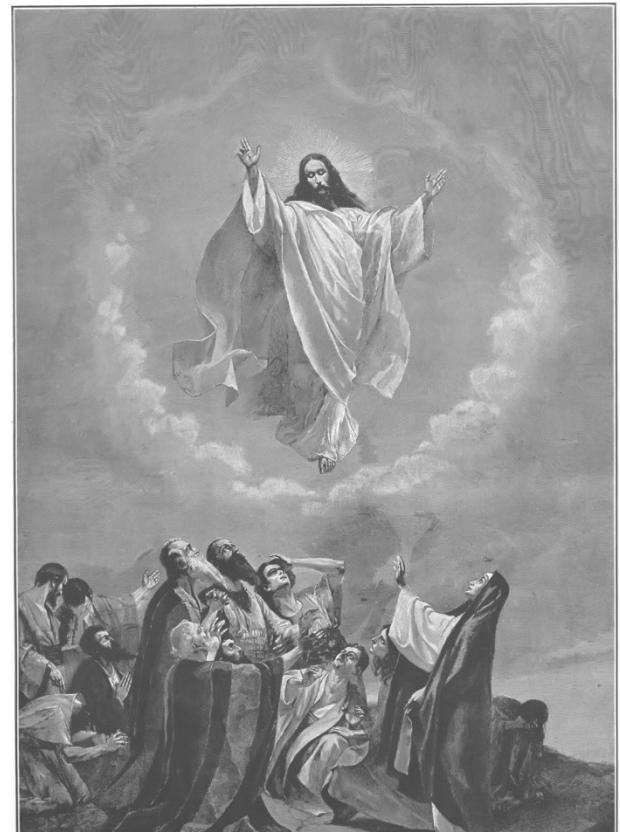
At the time of our conversion, we are made spiritually new in Christ. However, our physical existence is still bound to an evil, sinful creation. I remember hearing a preacher say that Jesus ascended to Heaven and we are waiting for His return, and we are living in this world in the “mean time.” We are 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 your 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



An artist's conception of Jesus' ascension.

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.

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](#))

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Colossians 3:15–17

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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Daniel 12:1–3 (ESV)

The Time of the End

12 “At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.³ And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

The Great Tribulation

Before I get in my car to take a trip, I check the weather report, especially if it's already snowing. If I hear that the driving is bad, then I usually plan on making the trip on a different day.

Sometimes we know trouble is ahead, but we choose to go right into the middle of the trouble. What we want to do matters more to us than the difficulty we will face. That is exactly what happens when we attempt to study the Great Tribulation. Let's see what the Bible tells us.

In this lesson we will study:

- What does the Bible teach about the Great Tribulation?
- When will the Great Tribulation take place?
- What difference does it make now that we know about it?

What does the Bible teach about the Great Tribulation?

The Bible uses the phrase “the Great Tribulation” in only two places: Revelation 2:22 and Revelation 7:14. That doesn’t mean that the Bible doesn’t refer to the events of the “Great Tribulation” in other passages. Since the phrase is used in those two places, that seems like a good place to start. We cannot doubt that the Bible is telling us about the Great Tribulation when it uses those exact words.

Revelation 2:22 – These are Jesus’ words to the church in Thyatira, at the beginning of the book of Revelation, when Jesus gives a message to the seven churches: Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7), Smyrna (Revelation 2:9-11), Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17), Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29), Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6), Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13), and Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22).

Here is what Jesus says to the church at Thyatira. I will comment on the parts I underline.

¹⁹ “I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.²⁰ But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.²¹ I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.²² Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works,²³ and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works.²⁴ But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden.²⁵ Only hold fast what you have until I come.²⁶ The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations,²⁷ and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.²⁸ And I will give him the morning star.²⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’⁶

What's happening at the church in Thyatira? It's a mix of good and bad. They have shown "love", "faith", "service", and "patient endurance" (Revelation 2:19). However, only some of the people are doing these good things. Other members of the congregation are doing what is bad. They have a person, whom Jesus calls "Jezebel", who is teaching what is false. The problem is that the leadership of the church tolerates this false teaching. The effect on the congregation, from Jesus' point of view, will require her punishment. She is leading other members of the congregation to commit sins of "sexual immorality" and to "eat food sacrificed to idols" (Revelation 2:20). Jesus gave her time to repent (Revelation 2:21). But now the time for repentance has passed. Jesus says that He is going to "throw her onto a sickbed" (Revelation 2:22). The NIV says that Jesus will "cast" Jezebel "on a bed of suffering" (Revelation 2:22). What about those who follow her false teaching, and act on it? Jesus will also "throw" them "into great tribulation unless they repent of her works" (Revelation 2:22). He will "strike her children dead" (Revelation 2:23).

Did you notice that the "great tribulation" mentioned in Revelation 2:22 is sent by Jesus to punish those in church of Thyatira who do not repent of their false teaching and sinful behavior? In this passage, then, "great tribulation" refers to punishment sent by Jesus Christ on those who fill the fellowship of believers with false teaching and sinful behavior. The fellowship of believers should be pure and holy. What Jesus is doing will ensure their purity.

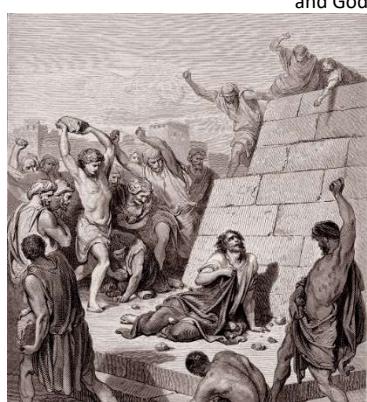
The phrase "**the great tribulation**" is also used in Revelation 7:14. This passage is from much later in the book of Revelation. Let's take a look:

¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of **the great tribulation**. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵ "Therefore they are before the throne of God,
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;
the sun shall not strike them,
nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."⁷



In Acts 7 Stephen was stoned to death for proclaiming the Gospel.

John sees a great multitude before the throne of God and the lamb (Revelation 7:9). An "elder" asks John to identify who the people "clothed in white robes". He asks, "from where have they come?" John answers, "Sir, you know" (Revelation 7:14). The elder tells him, "These are the ones coming out of **the great tribulation**." He goes on to explain why their robes are white, "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14). John tells us that the elder explains that they serve God "day and night in his temple" and that God "will shelter them with his presence" (Revelation 7:15). "They shall hunger no more" (Revelation 7:16). "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:17).

The "**great tribulation**" in this passage is not sent by Jesus, as in the first passage. This time the "**great tribulation**" describes a time when believers are persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Let's look at this passage for some answers. When does this occur? To be honest we aren't told. We might think that it is talking about the very last days, immediately before Jesus returns. It certainly includes that period of time. However, it might also include the period of time when John was writing down what Jesus showed him while he was on the island of Patmos. Let me explain why it

⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Re 2:19–29). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Re 7:13–17). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

might include the time that John was writing these words. The book of Revelation is addressed to the seven churches mentioned at the beginning of the book. They were facing intense persecution. These words would have given believers in those churches courage to persevere. John knew that if they could just hold on to their faith in Christ, and remain righteous before God, they would receive a great reward: "God would wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:17). We could speak of **tribulation** as beginning with the suffering of Christ on the cross and continuing with those who are in Christ, until the time of His return. The time of **tribulation** may include that very, long period of time. In the next section of this study, I'll show you a very good reason to think the **great tribulation** probably refers to that entire period of time. Of course, at the very end, just before Christ returns, things will get far, far worse (Daniel 12:1).

We should remember that Jesus told the church in Thyatira that He would send "great tribulation" if they forgot the truth about the Gospel and righteousness. Even though the "great tribulation" was not a persecution for their faith, they still needed to persevere in their love and devotion to Jesus Christ and His righteousness.

When will the Great Tribulation take place?

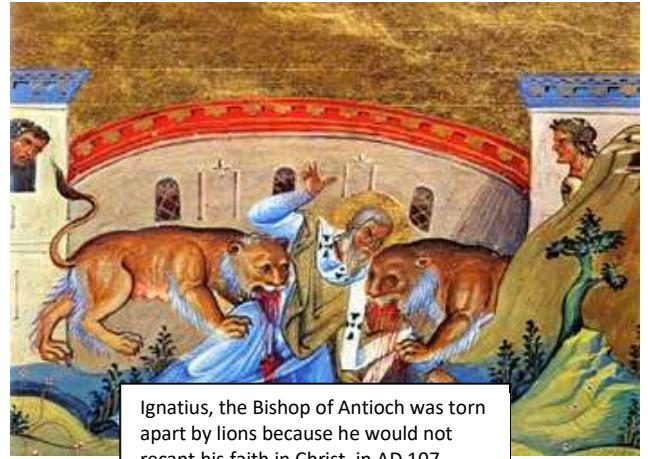
Most Christians today believe the **Great Tribulation** is a future event. The problem with that understanding is that some Christians get the idea that they can relax a little. They think that if it was the time of the "**great tribulation**" then it would be important to stay close to God. But, if it is far away then they don't need to worry about it now. But what does the Bible say about the time of the **Great Tribulation**?

There are so many passages about the **Great Tribulation** that I can't cover all of them here. My greatest concern is that some Christians think we can relax because the **Great Tribulation** is something that will take place in the future. One important passage in determining the time of the **Great Tribulation** is a passage that doesn't use the phrase "great tribulation," but clearly refers to it.

1 John 2:18–21 (ESV)

Warning Concerning Antichrists

¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. ²⁰ But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. ²¹ I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.



John is writing to Christians who are facing a problem within their congregations. False teachers, who used to be part of their fellowship, left them and struck out on their own. They claimed to be followers of Jesus Christ, but they were not. In fact, John called them "antichrists" because they were doing the bidding of the great "Antichrist" who is "coming." This means that there will come a time when the Antichrist will make a physical appearance in the world, just before Jesus returns. But the influence of the Antichrist and the tribulation had already begun when John wrote these words.

A time of more intense persecution is coming, but even in John's day, the **Great Tribulation** had begun. It would get much worse in the very last days. But the "last days" had already begun even when John was still alive. John says, "it is the last hour" (1 John 2:18).

Let's also take a look at 1 John 3:7-12 and Romans 12:17-20 & 26. We will compare those verses with verses found at the beginning of Genesis. I will put the verses in two columns to help you see the repeated words.

1 John 3:7-12	Genesis
<p>1 John 3:7–12 (ESV)</p> <p>7 Little children, <u>let no one deceive you</u>. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. 8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for <u>the devil has been sinning from the beginning</u>. The reason the Son of God appeared was to <u>destroy the works of the devil</u>.</p> <p>9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for <u>God's seed</u> abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.</p> <p>10 By this it is evident who are the <u>children of God</u>, and who are the <u>children of the devil</u>: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.</p>	<p>Genesis 3:13 (ESV)</p> <p>13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent <u>deceived me</u>, and I ate.”</p> <p>Genesis 3:15 (ESV)</p> <p>15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between <u>your offspring</u> and <u>her offspring</u>; he shall <u>bruise your head</u>, and you shall bruise his heel.”</p>
<p>Love One Another</p> <p>11 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12 We should not be <u>like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother</u>. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.</p>	<p>Genesis 4:1–15 (ESV)</p> <p>Cain and Abel</p> <p>4 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.” 2 And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. 3 In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, 4 and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, 5 but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. 6 The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.”</p> <p>8 Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, <u>Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him</u>. 9 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?” 10 And the LORD said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. 11 And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.” 13 Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. 14 Behold, you have driven me today away from the ground, and from your face I shall be hidden. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” 15 Then the LORD said to him, “Not so! If anyone kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who found him should attack him.</p>
<p>Romans 16:17–20 (ESV)</p> <p>Final Instructions and Greetings</p> <p>17 I appeal to you, brothers, to <u>watch out</u> for those who <u>cause divisions</u> and <u>create obstacles</u> contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. 18 For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by <u>smooth talk</u> and flattery they <u>deceive</u> the hearts of the naïve. 19 For your obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. 20 The God of peace will soon <u>crush Satan under your feet</u>. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.</p>	<p>Genesis 3:13 (ESV)</p> <p>13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent <u>deceived me</u>, and I ate.”</p> <p>Genesis 3:15 (ESV)</p> <p>15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between <u>your offspring</u> and <u>her offspring</u>; he shall <u>bruise your head</u>, and you shall bruise his heel.”</p>

The original “faith community” was in the Garden of Eden, at the beginning of the creation. But the community of believers need to recognize that they need to do what the original “faith community” failed to do. They need to “watch out” (Romans 16:17) for those who would “deceive the hearts of the naïve” (Romans 16:18). If believers remain faithful God will “crush Satan” under their feet (Romans 16:20). This is a fulfillment of the prophecy that the “offspring” of Eve would “bruise” or crush, the head of the serpent’s “offspring” (Genesis 3:15). Eve was “deceived” by the serpent (Genesis 3:13). The Christians Paul wrote to in Rome needed to be on the alert and avoid the deception Satan intended for them.

In his first letter, the Apostle John wrote to Christians. He urged them to not be deceived (1John 3:7), as Eve had been “deceived” (Genesis 3:13). This was something Satan had done from the very beginning. He had not stopped. Jesus came so that He might “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). John goes on to say that those who are truly saved will not continue in a pattern of sinfulness, because “God's seed” abides in them (1 John 3:9). Those who are “children of the devil” will continue in sin. But those who are “children of God” will do what is righteous (1 John 3:10).

Taking into account the connection between Tribulation and the temptation of Adam and Eve, we need to recognize that **tribulation** is a test of our faith. The purpose of tribulation is to purify the church, and the believers in the church. We might prefer to avoid tribulation, but it really isn't a choice for us.

If we choose to view tribulation as simply a bad experience we want to avoid, then we may choose to reject our faith in Christ to avoid conflict, and the tribulation that comes with believing and obeying Christ in the midst of a sinful world.

What difference does it make now that we know about it?

Now you know that there will be times when the forces of evil in this world will do everything they can to convince you to turn away from faith in Jesus Christ. They may convince you that sin is okay, and it really doesn't matter if you sin. But remember the words of Jesus, He will send tribulation to those who practice sin

without repentance (Revelation 2:22). Maybe you don't like to be threatened by Jesus Christ. I hope you don't. But if you, as a believer in Jesus Christ, don't like it here is what you can do about it: Believe Him. Trust Him. Obey Him.

Jesus isn't going to avoid shocking you into obedience. It is for your benefit, if you do as He asks. You will receive the reward Jesus Christ has earned for you, eternal life, free of tears (Revelation 7:17). The hardships of this world will pass away. These are the eternal blessings of new life in Christ.

While it is true that there will come a time of a greater hardship than what has ever been known (Daniel 12:1), everyone who believes in the true God will suffer tribulation. But there have been periods of tribulation ever since Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross.

The greatest danger of tribulation is not that it will hurt. The greatest danger is that you might give up, throw in the towel, and cast aside all the blessings that Jesus Christ will give you if you remain faithful to Him. So, persevere. Stay true to Christ.



The Time of the End (Daniel 12:1–13)

“At that **time** shall arise **Michael**, the **great prince** who has **charge** of your **people**. And **there** shall be a **time** of trouble, such as never has been since **there** was a nation till that **time**. But at that **time** your **people** shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the **book**. And **many** of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, **some** to **everlasting** life, and **some** to shame and **everlasting** contempt. And those who are **wise** shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn **many** to righteousness, like the stars **forever** and ever. But you, **Daniel**, shut up the **words** and seal the **book**, until the **time** of the end. **Many** shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” Then I, **Daniel**, looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this **bank** of the **stream** and one on that **bank** of the **stream**. And someone said to the man clothed in **linen**, who was above the **waters** of the **stream**, “How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?” And I heard the man clothed in **linen**, who was above the **waters** of the **stream**; he raised his right **hand** and his left **hand** toward heaven and swore by him who lives **forever** that it would be for a **time**, **times**, and half a **time**, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy **people** comes to an end all these **things** would be finished. I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, “O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these **things**?” He said, “Go your way, **Daniel**, for the **words** are shut up and sealed until the **time** of the end. **Many** shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the **wicked** shall act **wickedly**. And none of the **wicked** shall understand, but those who are **wise** shall understand. And from the **time** that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, **there** shall be 1,290 **days**. Blessed is he who waits and arrives at the 1,335 **days**. But go your way till the end. And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the **days**.”

(ESV)

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Resurrection from the Dead and the Story of Redemption?

God revealed the truth about the resurrection long before Jesus rose from the tomb. The Old Testament promised there would be a resurrection of the dead. By studying Old Testament prophecies, we can gain a fuller understanding of the great meaning and power of Jesus' resurrection. From Old Testament prophecies we understand more about Jesus' announcement that a "new creation" has begun.

As we study how the resurrection began a new creation, we will see that we can learn a great deal about how the resurrection is a part of the world to come, and the blessings God will grant to the people who truly believe in Jesus.

This week our lesson will focus on the resurrection. We will study the answers to:

- What does the Old Testament teach about a Resurrection of the Dead?
- How Was Jesus' resurrection in John's Account of the Gospel Different than What Was Expected?
- How should the Resurrection Change the Way I Live Today?

What does the Old Testament Teach about a Resurrection of the Dead?

We find many hints about a resurrection of the dead in the first three chapters of the Bible, Genesis 1-3. It might seem strange that the story of creation of this heaven and earth includes a lot of details about the new heavens and new earth that is to come, after this old creation passes away. The essential ingredients of God's design for creation, or the goal for God's creation, are explained in the first three chapters of Genesis. Sin prevented God's design for creation from reaching its goal, in the case of Adam and Eve. Christ will finally totally overcome sin, and the full potential of God's goal for creation will come into full flower. Just in case you're wondering about this idea, let me ask a question: Do you think God intended for Adam and Eve to spend all eternity in the Garden of Eden? I'll give the answer on the next page.

At the very beginning of the account of Adam and Eve we read how sin entered the world. The first aspect of death comes when Adam and Eve are separated from God. They had been in fellowship with God up to this point, but after they sinned, they no longer had regular fellowship with God. First came "spiritual death" or separation from God, later physical death followed.

When Adam and Eve sinned God gave them a promise, or a prophecy. In Genesis 3:15, God promised that the offspring, or seed, of the woman would strike, or crush, the head of the offspring of the serpent. This may imply that when this happens the curse of death will be withdrawn. This promise is presented by God as an antidote to what happened when sin entered the world. The removal of the curse of death, could point to a resurrection of the dead.

So, Genesis 3:15 is the first hint that a resurrection of the dead is coming. The curse of death will be withdrawn. Again, a resurrection of the dead is not specifically mentioned, but implied.

There is another hint in these first three chapters of the Bible. Adam and Eve clothe themselves with fig leaves because they realize they are naked (Genesis 3:7). Then, God gives them clothes of animal skins (Genesis 3:21). In ancient near eastern cultures when a person was given a new position, they were often given new clothes to go with

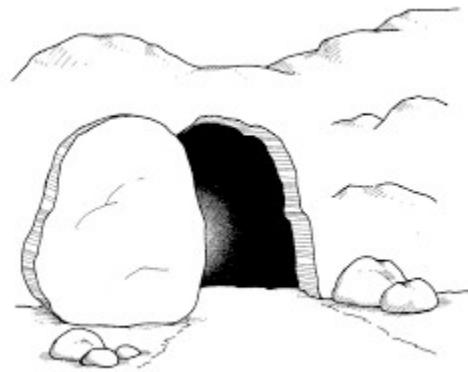
that position. Priests were given special clothing (Exodus 28:2&3). When Jacob wanted to honor his son Joseph, he gave him a very special coat to wear (Genesis 37:3). If you think about it, even today in our society, we attach importance to clothing. Uniforms can indicate a person's rank or position. The idea is that when God gave clothing to Adam and Eve He was telling them that He was giving them a position, and along with that position, an inheritance. The clothing was sort of like a down payment on what would come later. There isn't any explanation of what this inheritance would be, but in the context of receiving the curse of death, it provides assurance that God isn't finished with the human race. He has plans for the people He has created. We see the fulfillment of this plan in Isaiah 61:10 which speaks of how God has "clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has clothed me with the robe of righteousness". In other words, those who are in Christ will be clothed with His righteousness. Adam and Eve being given clothing foreshadows that those who believe in Christ will be clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Another hint is found in these first chapters of Genesis. God's commission God Adam in Genesis 1:26-30.

- Human beings were created to bear the image of God (Genesis 1:27)
- They were to have dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:26), as well as be fruitful and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28).

This commission is repeated to Noah, in Genesis 9:1-7, and repeated to Abraham and other descendants of Israel. Again, this shows that even though sin and death entered the world God was not finished with the people He created.

Earlier I asked if you think God intended for Adam and Eve to spend eternity in the Garden of Eden. If you look at God's commission given to Adam in Genesis 1:26-30, you see that he was to "fill the earth." He couldn't fill the earth if he never left the Garden of Eden, unless his assignment was to expand the boundary of the Garden of Eden so that it filled the whole earth. So, that would mean that God had a long-term mission for Adam, and the human race, that would have included making some changes to the earth and to the Garden of Eden. In other words, there is more to God's plan than having Adam spend eternity in the Garden of Eden, as it existed in its original form.



Even this early in the story of the Bible there is abundant evidence that God would provide a solution for the problem of sin. As Christians we see the answer to the problem of sin was Jesus Christ. In the first three chapters of Genesis, we find three hints: **(1)** the curse would be reversed (Genesis 3:15), **(2)** humanity had a future inheritance demonstrated by being given clothing (Genesis 3:21), and **(3)** the commission given to Adam in Genesis 1:26-30 that was repeated many times throughout the Old Testament, showing that God was not going to give up on humanity. That's a lot of Gospel news in just the first three chapters of Genesis.

There is much more Old Testament prophecy than we will cover in this lesson. This week we will focus on prophecies of Isaiah. These prophecies foretell both the resurrection of the dead and the age to come. In other words, in these prophecies resurrection and the coming age are tied together.

What do I mean by "the age to come" or "the coming age"? We will be looking at these passages to explain that. We will seek to understand scripture by using scripture to interpret scripture.

First, we'll look at Isaiah 43:18-21:

- 18 "Remember not the former things,
nor consider the things of old.
- 19 Behold, I am doing a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
**I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.**
- 20 The wild beasts will honor me,
the jackals and the ostriches,
for I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
- 21 the people whom I formed for myself
that they might declare my praise.

God says, "I am doing a new thing (Isaiah 43:19) ... I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert (Isaiah 43:19) ... I will give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people (Isaiah 43:20) ...

the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise (Isiah 43:21). This is a description of how God will make a new creation, “a new thing”. You might also notice that God created human beings so that they would praise Him.

Next take a look at Isaiah 65:17:

17 “For behold, I create new heavens
and a new earth,
and the former things shall not be remembered
or come into mind.

In the last quotation of Isaiah 43:19 the idea of a new creation was called “a new thing” (Isaiah 43:19). Here it is called a “new heavens and a new earth” (Isaiah 65:17). Notice one other detail: “The former things shall not be remembered or come to mind” (Isaiah 65:17). So, a new creation, with “new heavens” and a “new earth” is foretold. But the old creation, and its sinful domain, will be eliminated. That is what the prophecy says.

And, third, let’s take a look at Isaiah 66:22:

22 “For as the new heavens and the new earth
that I make
shall remain before me, says the Lord,
so shall your offspring and your name remain.

The “new heavens” and “new earth” are mentioned again. God says that he will “make” them. They will “remain” before Him. But don’t miss the last line. Those who are part of this new creation will also “remain” before God, as well as their “offspring.” As Christians we would interpret “offspring” as those who receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ and believe.

We’ve seen a lot in Isaiah about the new creation, but what about resurrection? Look at the last words of Isaiah 66:22, “your name [will] remain.” This is a promise of eternal life. The new creation will be permanent and eternal. And those people who will become part of this new creation, they will be permanent and eternal as well.



Yet, so far, we have not seen a clear description of the resurrection in Isaiah. We will find it in Isaiah 26:19:

19 Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise.
You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!
For your dew is a dew of light,
and the earth will give birth to the dead.

Here is a very clear description of resurrection: “Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy ... the earth will give birth to the dead” (Isaiah 26:19). Put this together what was foretold about the new creation in the other verses from Isaiah, and clearly these prophecies connect the new creation and the resurrection together. They are both part of what is going to happen.

These ideas are more fully developed in the New Testament. Jesus Christ is understood as fulfilling the prophecies about the resurrection and the new creation. Next, we will turn to the Gospel of John. There is much more in the New Testament about the resurrection, and we will look at those parts of the New Testament in future lessons.

How Was Jesus’ resurrection in John’s Account of the Gospel Different than What Was Expected?

The Gospel according to John explains the meaning of the resurrection. Many hints about the resurrection were revealed in the Old Testament, before Jesus was born. But details about resurrection were easily misunderstood by the Jewish people. We will look at those misunderstandings more in the weeks to come. In this lesson we will look at how Jesus explained that He would fulfill those prophecies.

In the Gospel According to John Isaiah 43, 65, and 66 form the basis for understanding Christ’s resurrection. The resurrection is understood as part of a new creation. This new creation begins, partly during Jesus’ teaching ministry, but especially when Jesus dies on the cross and in His resurrection from the dead. The word “inaugurated” is used to describe this beginning of the new Kingdom of a New Creation. The word “consummated” describes the time when the Old Creation will be destroyed, and only the New Creation will remain. This will happen when Jesus returns to earth. In the meantime,

both the Old Creation and the New Creation exist, both at the same time. Let's take a look at some verses in the Gospel According to John that teach us about the resurrection of Christ:

- **John 6:39** "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of **ALL THAT HE HAS GIVEN ME** I lose nothing, but **RAISE IT UP** on the **last day**."
- **John 6:40** "For this is the will of My Father, that **EVERYONE WHO** beholds the Son and **BELIEVES IN HIM** will have **ETERNAL LIFE**, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."
- **John 6:44** "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will **RAISE HIM UP ON THE LAST DAY**."
- **John 6:54** "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood **has ETERNAL LIFE**, and I will **RAISE HIM UP ON THE LAST DAY**."
- **John 11:24** Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the **RESURRECTION ON THE LAST DAY**."
- **John 12:48** "He who **REJECTS ME** and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what **WILL JUDGE HIM AT THE LAST DAY**."

Jesus uses the expression "**all that He has given to me**" to describe the men and women who have come to believe in Him. He says that He will "**raise ... up**" these people on "**the last day**" (John 6:39). Jesus is saying that when He returns all who have believed in Him will rise from the dead, and to life in the new creation. In fact, "**everyone who ... believes in [Jesus] ... will have "eternal life"**" (John 6:4). When the new creation remains, after the old creation is destroyed, those who believed in Jesus will still be alive because they have resurrection bodies. They are part of the new creation. If a someone has believed in Jesus, then Jesus will "**raise him up on the last day**" (John 6:44). By believing in Jesus as Lord and savior, or everyone who "**eats**" His "**flesh**" and "**drinks**" His "**blood**" has "**eternal life**" (John 6:54). The words at the beginning of this verse are obvious references to communion, where we eat the bread and drink from the cup that represent the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. It isn't eating these items that saves us. They point to putting our faith in Jesus' death on the cross as the payment for our sins. By putting our faith in Jesus Christ, we receive eternal life. Notice, Jesus says everyone who has believed in Him "**has**" received "**eternal life**." Eternal life begins now, when we believe in Him. It isn't only about the future. It is a present reality. The fullness of the new creation is yet to come, but the reality is here now, even though the old creation has not yet passed away.

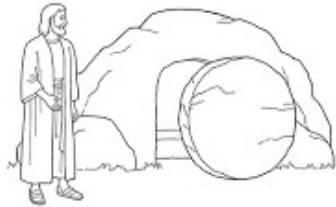


When Jesus was talking to Martha, and told her that Lazarus would rise again, Martha replied that she knew that on the "**last**" day her brother would be resurrected (John 11:24). This means that she understood, from the Old Testament, that resurrection was foretold. What she was going to see only moments later was that Jesus is the fulfillment of those prophecies. In fact, Jesus is "**the resurrection**" (John 11:25). He is the power of the resurrection. He is the King of the New Creation, and His resurrection will signal the beginning of the New Creation.

There is a down side to all of this. When the New Creation comes in its full, physical presence, the Old Creation will be destroyed. Everyone who "**rejects**" Jesus Christ, and His salvation, Jesus Himself "**will judge ... on the last day**" (John 12:48).

There's still more to learn about the resurrection in the Gospel of John. Jesus refers to the "**last hour**," an expression He borrows from Daniel 12:1-2, one of the well-known prophecies of resurrection in the Old Testament. Jesus tells Martha, while standing outside her brother, Lazarus's tomb, "**I am the resurrection and the life**" (John 11:23-25). The idea of being born again in John 3:3 also connects resurrection to new creation. Unless a person is "**born again**" he cannot "**see the kingdom of God**" (John 3:3). The "**kingdom of God**" refers to the new creation. Unless you have the life of the resurrection you won't be alive to see the new creation. To explain this, Jesus refers to Ezekiel 36:25-27 which foretells how God will "**sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness**" ... and "**I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you ... I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.**" There will be transformation of the believer, when he or she receives a resurrection body in the New Creation. That believer will no longer be able to sin because will transform that believer in such a way that sinful behavior will not be able to hinder him or her.

What does all this mean? When Jesus rose from the dead His resurrection body was a newly created body. It had passed from the old creation to the new creation. Some people who teach the Bible refer to this as the future, new



creation, reaching back, and penetrating into the old creation, the physical universe we now live in. Jesus only remained on earth for a short time after His resurrection. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God (Hebrews 1:3; 10:12; 12:2). The New Creation is a Heavenly reality now. Jesus is on His throne in Heaven, as King of the New Creation. But the day is coming when He will return to earth, and the Old Creation will pass away, and only the New Creation will remain. The "first earth" will

pass away (Revelation 21:1. We know that in the new creation "the dwelling place of God" will be "with man" (Revelation 2:3). In other words, the presence of God will be with believers in a way that is far more powerful than what we experience now. The sin of this world will be gone. God "will wipe away every tear." "Death will be no more." There will be "mourning," "crying," or "pain." All of those dreaded experiences will pass away (Revelation 21:4).

How should the resurrection change the way I should live today?

Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ is part of the New Creation that began when Jesus rose from the grave (2 Corinthians 5:17). They have been born again (John 3:3). They will live to see the Kingdom of the New Creation (John 3:3).

Do you truly believe in Jesus? Believing in Jesus means that He has control of your life, because He has made you new, in His image (1Corinthians 15:49; Colossians 3:10). Just as Adam was created in the image of God, the person who believes in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is created all over again, and in the process the image of God. What was damaged by sin is being made right.

What does this have to do with how I live my life? If you are new in Jesus Christ, you will to put sin to death whenever it comes into your life (Romans 8:13, Colossians 3:5). We should take control of our thoughts (2 Corinthians 10:5), and make them captive to serving Jesus.

If I still sin, does that mean I'm not saved? We are to always strive to be without sin (1 John 2:1). But, we cannot claim to be without sin (1 John 1:8&10). We must always confess our sins to receive forgiveness (1 John 1:9), and He will always forgive us if we ask Him to. The goal is to strive for a life free of sin. Settling for doing less sin is not the goal. To live free from all sin is the goal.

I think of the image of Adam in the Garden of Eden. He should have driven the serpent out of the Garden, or killed it. Instead, when Eve introduced Adam to the serpent, Adam was led into sin by the serpent. Recently I mentioned that there are two words in Genesis 2:15 that indicate that Adam wasn't doing his job when he gave in to the serpent. Let me review what I said about those two words. Adam was put in the Garden of Eden to "work it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). Those two words, "work" and "keep" can be translated differently. The first word can also be translated as "serve". In fact, this word "serve" is sometimes used to describe the work of worshipping God in the Temple (2 Samuel 5:18; 2 Kings 10:19, 21, 22, 23; Psalm 97:7; Isaiah 19:21, 23). The other word can be translated as "watch" or "guard". This word is used to describe the work of the priests who guarded the Temple to make sure no one would pollute the holiness of the Temple (Numbers 3:8, 10; 18:7; 1 Samuel 2:9; 2 Kings 12:9; Nehemiah 13:22). The same word can also be translated as "observing" God's Law, which means to obey God's Law (Exodus 12:17, 24; Leviticus 19:37; 26:3; Deuteronomy 5:12; 16:1; Nehemiah 10:29; Psalm 106:3; 119:34; Ezekiel 43:11). So, if Adam's job was to keep what was evil out of the Garden of Eden, he failed miserably when he failed to drive out the serpent.

Vigilance must be put into practice. We need to drive out thought patterns that lead us into sin. For most men, the first thought is of sexual fantasies. That's true, unless you're thinking about your own wife. However, sin includes many, many other actions as well. Spiteful words said in a moment of anger. Being angry when you stub your toe demonstrates you are angry at God for allowing you to stub your toe Who else could you be angry with? That kind of anger toward God can fester into bitterness against God, based on a misunderstanding of God's justice and love.

What if you don't see vigilance against sin at work in yourself? Pray that God will give you a new heart that craves to do what pleases God. If Christ has made you new, you will be changed. If you're not sure whether you've changed, then pray that God will bring that change to you. This transformation can only come by the power of Christ and His resurrection power. Only He can make you new. So, you need His power to make it happen. You can't do it without His power at work in you. Then, continue to confess your sin, and to seek God's changes in your outlook and attitude.

What if you've prayed, you see at least a little indication that God has changed you, then what? Then, you step out in faith, thanking God for small transformations of your heart that you can see, and continue to pray that the transformation will continue. In time you will be able to look back and see many, many times when God has had His hand on you. You will see many times when His power got you through.

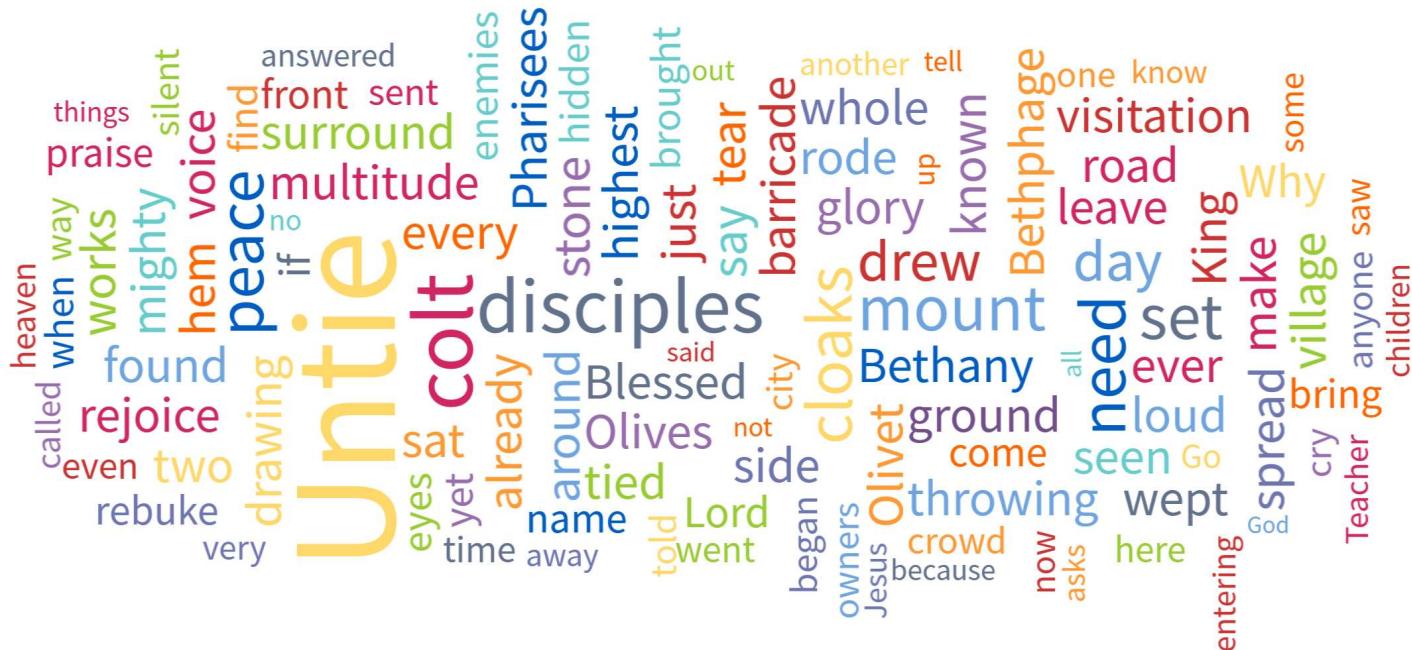
Remember, if you believe in Jesus Christ you will live to see His Kingdom come in fullness and glory. We don't know all the details, but we do know the best part is that He will be with everyone who truly believes for all eternity.

John 11:1–57

W	E	E	P	P	B	C	L	G	G	D	Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha . It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."
A	T	D	K	P	R	I	E	S	T	N	
L	M	J	C	A	P	H	N	U	D	I	
K	B	B	R	O	T	H	E	R	E	H	
S	U	S	E	J	N	L	H	A	N	D	
D	D	R	O	L	B	S	W	Z	R	A	Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister
R	J	A	H	M	I	W	O	A	U	D	and Lazarus . So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The
M	E	H	U	R	D	E	L	L	A	C	disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in
G	A	T	H	E	R	J	V	U	E	L	the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in
V	S	R	S	V	D	E	N	E	P	O	the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." After saying these things, he said to
G	H	A	Y	I	P	T	N	E	W	V	them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." The disciples said to
C	O	M	E	L	S	A	I	D	T	E	him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, " Lazarus has

to **Martha** and **Mary** to console them concerning their brother. So when **Martha** heard that **Jesus** was coming, she went and met him, but **Mary** remained seated in the house. **Martha** said to **Jesus**, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." **Jesus** said to her, "Your brother will rise again." **Martha** said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." **Jesus** said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." When she had said this, she went and called her sister **Mary**, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now **Jesus** had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where **Martha** had met him. When the **Jews** who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw **Mary** rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Now when **Mary** came to where **Jesus** was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When **Jesus** saw her weeping, and the **Jews** who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." **Jesus** wept. So the **Jews** said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?" Then **Jesus**, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. **Jesus** said, "Take away the stone." **Martha**, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days." **Jesus** said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And **Jesus** lifted up his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "**Lazarus**, come out." The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. **Jesus** said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." Many of the **Jews** therefore, who had come with **Mary** and had seen what he did, believed in him, but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what **Jesus** had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that **Jesus** would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they made plans to put him to death. **Jesus** therefore no longer walked openly among the **Jews**, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples. Now the Passover of the **Jews** was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. They were looking for **Jesus** and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?" Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him. ([ESV](#)) Exported from [Logos Bible Software](#).





Luke 19:29–44 (ESV)

²⁹ When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, "Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.'" ³² So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. ³³ And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴ And they said, "The Lord has need of it." ³⁵ And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶ And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸ saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" ³⁹ And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." ⁴⁰ He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."

Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem

⁴¹ And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴² saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side ⁴⁴ and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

Jesus Wants His People to Praise Him

On Palm Sunday Jesus wanted people to praise Him, and to know that He was the Savior sent by God. Why did Jesus want the people of Jerusalem, and the Jewish people, to praise Him?

What if Jesus had caused the stones to cry out? (Luke 19:40)

Jesus could work miracles. When the Pharisees asked Jesus to “rebuke” His “disciples” for praising Him (Luke 19:39), Jesus seems to threaten to do cause the stones to cry out in praise to Him. I chose to use Luke’s account because he mentions these words about how Jesus says that stones would have cried out if the people had been quiet.

Perhaps Jesus was pointing out how ridiculous it would have been to ask the people to stop praising Him. Yet, maybe, Jesus wasn't joking. Do you thinking that if the people had been forced into silence, and then the stones had cried out in praise of Jesus, that the Pharisees would have believed in Jesus then?

On the other hand, we might wonder if the stones had cried out to praise Jesus if they might have done a better job. In just a short time another crowd of people, on another day, will turn against Jesus. The two groups of people were probably completely different people. But if this crowd praising Jesus were sincere, how is it that they had virtually no influence on what happened only days later? Could the stones, had they cried out, have had a greater influence on those people who cried out to crucify Jesus?

Why did Jesus prefer people to stones?

The Jewish people had a history of being God's people. Jesus' arrival was the fulfillment of promises given to the ancestors of these people. Whether they realized it or not, Jesus valued their relationship to Him.

So, what did these people say? What did their words mean?

Hosanna (Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:9; John 12:13)

Although it's not mentioned in Luke's account, in Matthew and Mark the people cried out, "Hosanna" as Jesus came into Jerusalem. The word "hosanna" means, "help", "save," or "I pray." So these people were crying out to Jesus to help them, or to save them, and they were begging Him to do it.

Consider Jesus' name. The name "Jesus" is actually the same word as "Joshua," or "Yeshuah." The name means "one who saves."

So, on Palm Sunday, the crowds were calling out to one named, Jesus, which means "one who saves" to "save them."

You might be surprised to learn that this was commonly done on this day, just before Passover, as people were entering the city. This was done to lots of people as they entered the city. But something happened that day, the practice took on special significance. The Pharisees recognized this and asked Jesus to tell the people to stop focusing their "Hosannahs" on Him. I think they were afraid that the people might think Jesus was a Savior. The problem was, Jesus was the Savior whom God had sent into the world. Jesus couldn't tell the people to stop. In Luke 1:30 an angel told Mary to name Him, Jesus. In Mark 1:21, an angel told Joseph to name the baby Jesus. So, even though Jesus' name was a fairly common name, it had special significance.

Two lines converged. Jesus' name meant "savior." The people were calling on Jesus to save them. And, behind these events, countless prophecies had said that Jesus would come to save His people.

Blessed (Matthew 21:9; Mark 11:9; Luke 19:38; John 12:13)

What does the word "blessed" mean? If God is the one being blessed, means to praise God. Or, if a human being is the one being blessed, it means the human being will be "happy" or "favored." Since Jesus, is God, and He is the one being "blessed" it means that Jesus is being praised.

One question about this, that has long been a question in my mind, is why would God want us to praise Him? Why does Jesus want the praise of human beings?

I can't answer that question, but I know that Jesus does want our praise. God does want our praise. In fact, it seems to be one of the key reasons that God created us. Jesus wants us to love Him.

How can we bless His name? The Bible provides several answers:

- Primary: love and obey Him.
 - ^{NRS} **1 John 5:3** For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome,
 - ^{NRS} **Psalm 37:5** Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.
- Express this by giving ourselves to Him.
 - ^{NRS} **Romans 12:1** I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
- Give Your mind to Him
 - ^{NRS} **Romans 12:2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-- what is good and acceptable and perfect.
 - ^{NRS} **Matthew 22:37** He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'
 - ^{NRS} **Philippians 4:8** Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Son of David (Matthew 21:9)

Jesus is a descendant of David, or David's seed. In 2 Samuel 7:12 we find a prophecy that God will establish His Kingdom through David's seed, or David's descendant. This prophecy is at the end of a long chain of prophecies about descendants, or seeds, depending on the translation you read. The first prophecy is found in Genesis 3:15, and continues through to 2 Samuel 7:12. Take a look:

- The "seed" thought it Genesis 3:15.
 - distinctively masculine pronoun clearly referring to a man.
 - Genesis 4:1 -- Eve mistakes Cain as the one prophesied.

- Abraham - Genesis 22:17 - I will multiply your seed, vs. 18 nations will be blessed to you.
- Isaac - Genesis 26:3&4 -- unto thy seek I will give these countries, multiply your seed, by your seed I will multilply the nations.
- Jacob - Genesis 28:13-14 -- thy seed ... shall be as the dust of the earth, in thy seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.
- David's seed - II Samuel 7:12 -- I will set up thy seed ... and I will establish my kingdom.

Jesus wanted the people descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to know that David's descendant had fulfilled the prophecies that had been given since the time of Adam and Eve. God's chosen Savior had arrived.

On Palm Sunday we see that God's plan for His people is coming together. For this day, they begin to glimpse and understand. But, then by the end of the week, things change. It is probably not the same people, and there were a lot of powers at work, struggling to get rid of Jesus.

We have an opportunity to celebrate who Jesus is in many different ways, to proclaim with our words, and show with our actions. The world around us may not believe this, and we may struggle to help them see and understand. Because Jesus lives, because He is our rock, we can cling to Him. He will save us.

Jesus has come to offer His salvation to any who will receive it. He wants His people to come to Him, and to believe in Him. And He wants His people to praise Him for His salvation. Will you receive Him as your Savior? Will you praise Him for giving you the gift of salvation?

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

When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, saying, “Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ you shall say this: ‘The Lord has need of it.’” So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the colt?” And they said, “The Lord has need of it.” And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.” And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

(ESV)



What Does It Take to Believe?

Many Christians are so convinced that Jesus' resurrection fulfilled of Old Testament prophecy that they can't understand why everyone isn't equally convinced. Yet, in the Bible, we have an example of someone who was convinced that Jesus was not the true Messiah, until He came face to face with the risen Jesus. Only then was he convinced. It took a miracle to convince Saul to believe in Jesus' resurrection, and to answer God's call to become a servant of Christ.

In this lesson we will consider:

- What did it take for Paul to believe?
- How did Paul change?
- What about me?

What did it take for Paul to believe?

Many years after coming to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Acts 9:1-19), Paul was put in prison. Twice he gave a defense for his belief, explaining what had happened to him that caused him to change. Those accounts are found in Acts 21:37-22:21 and 26:12-29. In Acts 26:12-29 Paul refers to Christ's resurrection two times:

Acts 26:8 (ESV)

⁸Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God **raises the dead**?

Acts 26:22-23 (ESV)

²²To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to **rise from the dead**, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

Paul, the name given to him after his conversion (Acts 13:9), understood that it would be difficult to accept the idea that Jesus rose from the dead. He explained that it was the power of God, the creator of the universe, that caused Jesus to rise from the dead (Acts 26:8).

Paul understood why people might have difficulty believing that Jesus' resurrection was true. Before a divine appointment with the risen Christ, Paul had railed against claims that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. When the deacon, Stephen, was stoned to death a "young man named Saul" took care of the garments of the people who killed Stephen (Acts 8:59). He "approved of [Stephen's] execution" (Acts 8:1). Later Saul's name would be changed to Paul (Acts 13:9).

We read "Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison" (Acts 3:3). Just before he encounters the risen Christ, Saul is "still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1).

So, Paul understood what it was like to hear the Gospel and reject it. He had done that himself, until the miracle of Christ appearing to him on the Road to Damascus. He also knew that God had called him to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. So, he shared the story of his conversion.

In Acts 26:12-20 we find the third time the story is given in the book of Acts. The story is consistently the same each time it is repeated. If we look at Exodus 3:1-10, when God calls Moses to deliver the Jewish people from Pharaoh, we find parallels to Jesus calling Paul. Moses will deliver the Jews from slavery to Pharaoh. Paul will deliver many Gentiles from bondage to sin.

This was all part of God's plan.

Exodus 3:1–10 (ESV)	Acts 26:12–20 (ESV)
<p>The Burning Bush</p> <p>3 Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. 3 And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." 4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5 Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6 And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.</p> <p>7 Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9 And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."</p>	<p>Paul Tells of His Conversion</p> <p>12 "In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. 13 At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. 14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' 15 And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.' 16 But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, 17 delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you 18 to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'</p> <p>19 "Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.</p>

To begin our examination of these two passages notice that Moses' name is repeated twice, "Moses, Moses," when God calls to him from the burning bush (Exodus 3:4). Saul's name is also repeated twice, when Jesus calls to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 26:14). Both saw a form of light. Moses saw a burning bush, that was "not consumed" by the fire (Exodus 3:2). Paul saw a "blinding light in the heaven" (Acts 26:13). A voice from the burning bush tells Moses, "I am that God of your father, the God of Abraham" (Exodus 3:6). God has seen the affliction of His people and has come down to deliver them (Exodus 3:7&8). The voice from above tells Saul, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (Acts 3:15). In both cases a voice identifies Himself as God, with Moses, or Jesus, with Paul. Both times the person, either Moses or Paul, becomes God's instrument to deliver God's people from suffering. Both encounters end with the person, either Moses or Paul, being sent (Exodus 3:10, Acts 26:17). To Moses, God says, "I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:10). To Paul, Jesus says, "I have appeared to you ... to appoint you as a servant and witness to [Jews and Gentiles] to open their eyes ... that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 26:16-18)



An artist's conception shows God with the angels speaking to Moses from the burning bush.

These parallels are no coincidence. I think Luke wrote his account to highlight the parallels so that they would be clear to the person who knew the Bible well and studied it carefully. Luke is telling us that God called Paul in pretty much the same pattern that He called Moses. Luke wants us to see that Paul was a new Moses, sent to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. Moses was sent to set the slaves free. Paul was sent so that slaves to sin might be set free from their sins.

Paul knew that his account might not persuade King Agrippa, but he told the story of how his life was changed, anyway. He must have known that telling his story would not gain his freedom (Acts 26:32). Paul wanted to share the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus' resurrection. He wanted to tell his story so that other people might come to believe in Jesus and be saved from their sins.

God called Paul to tell of the resurrection of Jesus to the Gentiles. Saul later had his name changed to Paul. He had a new name because he was a new creature no longer persecuting the Christians.

Not only did Paul stop persecuting Christians he preached the very same Gospel he had opposed. An enemy of the Gospel switched sides.

What does it take for a person to believe that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead? It takes an act of God. For Paul it took the form of a profound miracle, when Jesus called Him to believe (John 6:44). The only way a person can come to believe is if God has called that person (John 6:65). When God called you and I to come to believe in Jesus it probably wasn't as spectacular as when Paul met Jesus on the Road to Damascus, but we are still believers, just as Paul was. We are saved by the same Savior. Just as God called to proclaim the Christ's salvation, He calls us to do the same.

How did Paul change?

In Moses' time, the enemy of God's chosen people was Pharaoh. Saul, before his conversion to Jesus, was an enemy of the first Christians.

Pharaoh caused God's chosen people to suffer. He was their enemy. As a result, God sent plagues, then God poured out His judgment on Pharaoh with the waters of the Red Sea drowning Pharaoh's army. God's judgment on Pharaoh was severe because of the sin Pharaoh had committed.

Paul also caused those chosen by God to suffer. Before Paul met Jesus he was like Pharaoh, he oppressed God's people. But that was before Saul died to his old self, and Jesus made him into a new person. The new person, called Paul, was like Moses, and not at all like Pharaoh.

God the Father poured out His judgment, but not on Paul. Instead, God the Father poured out His judgement on Jesus, who suffered on the cross, paying the price of sin. Paul's sin was great, but he was forgiven. Jesus received the harsh judgement, not Paul. The power that raised Jesus from the tomb was at work in Paul and made him into a new man. Paul belonged to Jesus, as a result of His transformation. God used Paul to proclaim forgiveness through Christ so that others might also come to believe in Christ as Savior.

What about me?

You may feel that you don't have much to offer Jesus in exchange for His salvation. That is true for everyone who comes to believe in Jesus. What did Paul bring to Jesus at the time of his conversion? What had Paul done to earn forgiveness and salvation? Absolutely nothing, just like you and me.

I heard someone say that the only thing we bring to Jesus is our sin, and He pours out on us the fullness of His grace. He forgives our sins and gives us His inheritance. That was Paul's experience. Will you receive the gift of grace that comes through Christ? If you would like to receive the gift of Christ's salvation pray that He will give you the gift of faith to truly believe in Jesus (Ephesians 2:8).

If you already believe in Jesus, then thank God! Praise Him for the grace Jesus has shown to you by sacrificing His own life for your benefit (Galatians 1:4; 2:20; 1 Timothy 2:6 & 14). Thank God for giving you the gift to believe (Ephesians 2:8). Rejoice that the power that raised Jesus from the dead has made you a new creature (Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 5:17). Step out in faith that God will give you everything you need to obey and serve Him (Philippians 4:19). Be amazed at the spectacular and wonderful salvation you have in Jesus. Be amazed at how Jesus transformed Paul (Acts 9:21) and be amazed at what He is doing in your own life.



An artist's conception of Saul encountering Jesus on the Road to Damascus.

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

“My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee. And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead? “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities. “In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

(ESV)



Philippians 2:1–18 (ESV)

2 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Lights in the World

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷ Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

What Paul Taught about the Resurrection

Last week we looked at the conversion of the Apostle Paul found in Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-21; 26:12-29. While he was persecuting Christians, Christ appeared to him. He was blinded. Jesus spoke to Paul when a blinding light appeared in the sky. Then, a Christian named Ananias cured him of his blindness by the power of Christ. From that point on Paul was a new person, made new by the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

How does that miraculous account correspond to what Paul wrote in his many letters to Christians? To understand what Paul taught about the resurrection we will look at:

- What Paul taught about the resurrection in Philippians 2:1-18
- How Paul's teaching about the resurrection connected to Old Testament teaching
- How to Die and Rise with Jesus

What Paul taught about the resurrection in Philippians?

Paul writes, “It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake” (Philippians 1:29). To join Christ in the resurrection, we must first Him in His death. Without death there can be no resurrection. This includes more than physical death. Christians must die to the things they leave behind when they believe in Jesus. There are treasures, dreams, and hopes that must die, but they will be replaced by eternal treasures, bigger dreams, and hopes of heavenly and spiritual blessings.

Christ also gave up everything. He left His high position in Heaven (Philippians 2:6). He “emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant” (Philippians 2:7). He further humbled Himself by dying on a cross (Philippians 2:8). God the Father “exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name” (Philippians 2:9). Paul is encouraging the Christians to be like Jesus, who gave up everything to become like a servant, and die on a cross.



Even in chains, Paul preached the Gospel to his captors.

Paul encourages his readers to “work out [their] own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12&13). “In the midst of a crooked and twisted generation” Christians should “shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain” (Philippians 2:16). So, when Christ returns, these Christians will be revealed as belonging to Christ, and they will receive their resurrection bodies for their new, eternal life with Jesus.

We may have had times when we lost a friend, or even a group of friends because of our faith in Christ, but I expect very few of us have lost everything, the way Paul did. He was well educated. He had been through rigorous training that prepared him for a position of leadership within the religious community. Because of his conversion to Christ all of his prestigious credentials were no longer recognized by the Jewish community. Whatever home he'd

had was gone. Whatever friends he'd had were no longer friends. He couldn't go back.

The remarkable thing is, Paul didn't want to go back. He considered his “new” way of life far superior to what he'd had before.

How Paul’s teaching about the resurrection connected to Old Testament teaching?

In Philippians 2:15 Paul refers to the Christians in Philippi as those who will “**shine as lights**.” Paul is drawing a comparison of these Christians to the “**wise**” in Daniel 12:3 who will “**shine like the brightness of the sky above ... like the stars**.” This passage provides amazing information about the resurrection. Some Bible scholars consider Daniel 12:1-3 the clearest Old Testament prophecy of the resurrection.

Philippians 2:14-16	Daniel 12:1-3
<p>¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.</p>	<p>12 “At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. ² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.</p>

Philippians 2:15 does not mention the resurrection, but Daniel 2:1-3 does. It says, “**many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.**” This is definitely a reference to the resurrection. When Paul calls the Christians “**lights**” he is

drawing a parallel to Daniel 12:3, where those Daniel calls “**those who are wise**” the people who were resurrected from the dead in the previous verse. These “**wise**” people will shine “**like the stars forever and ever**”. Believers are now living a new kind of life, Paul says in Philippians 2:16, and they should hold “**fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.**” Paul is telling his readers to hold tightly to their grip on new life of Jesus’ resurrection.

So, is this resurrection only referring to those who will go to heaven? To answer that let’s look at Daniel 2:2-3:

² And many of **those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.** ³ And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. (Daniel 12:2-3, ESV)

Daniel 12:2 says that at the time that is coming “**those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt**” (Daniel 12:2). This resurrection refers to all people, both those going to Hell and those going to Heaven. Paul is saying that Christians have actually entered into the life of the resurrection ahead of those who will go to Hell. This is possible because they have joined Jesus in His death and in His resurrection. So, because Jesus entered the “age of the resurrection”, those who are in Jesus can also enter into the “age of the resurrection”. The full resurrection, when Christians will receive a new body, will come only when Jesus returns. But, in the meantime, Christians are made new in Christ by being given a new heart and a new spirit. Their body is still the same old body, not the new resurrection body. Physically, they are in this world. Spiritually, they are of the world to come.

Coming back to our concern about joining Jesus in His death and resurrection, we realize that the prophets hoped for this. They didn’t fully understand it. Even though we live after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are still struggling to understand its full impact on those who believe in Him as Lord and savior. Some people have suggested that Christians experience their union with Jesus by living their lives, and deaths, in a J-shaped curve.

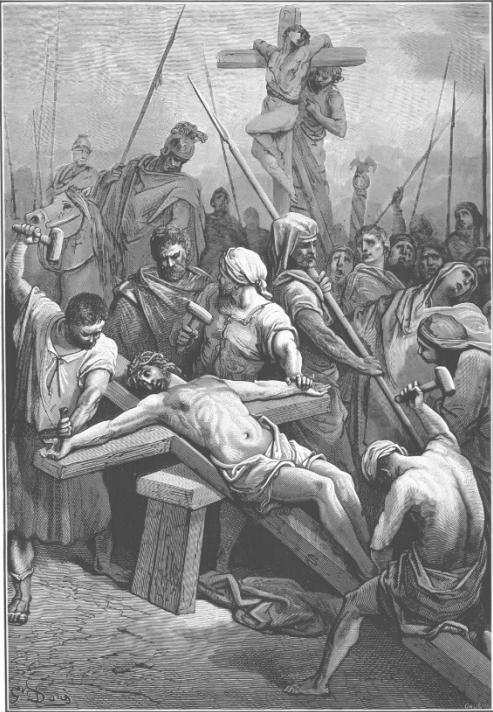
How to Die and Rise with Jesus

Recently I heard a sermon about “a J-shaped curve.”⁸ If we join Jesus in his death, we will go to the bottom of a J-shaped curve. But like a J-shaped curve, we will not remain at the bottom. We will not remain dead. We will rise again, because we share in Jesus’ resurrection.

As Christians we recognize that we will be resurrected after we die, or when Christ returns, whichever comes first. But on a spiritual level we die and rise again repeatedly. We can suffer the pains of dying with Jesus in many different ways, spiritually.

The first way a believer can die with Christ occurs when evil comes at the believer from outside of himself or herself. This can come in the form of an illness, or the death of a loved one. It could even be harassment from other people. The Apostle Paul experienced a “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7). It was sent by Satan, but God used Paul’s suffering to teach Paul to “boast all the more gladly of [his] weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon [him]” (2 Corinthians 12:9). When believers die with Jesus then Jesus can fill that emptiness, as painful as it is, with the power of His resurrection. Paul speaks of how Jesus emptied Himself by humbling Himself and becoming a human being, and further humbled Himself, even to the point of dying on the cross (Philippians 2:6-8). Our attitude should be like Jesus’ attitude (Philippians 2:5). We can’t know when Jesus will use the power of His resurrection to bring healing to us. It may not come as quickly as we would like it to come, but we have the assurance that the power of the resurrection will come to us. As we have died with Him, we will be raised with Him.

⁸ Paul Miller who preached the sermon also wrote a book on the same topic: *J-Curve: Dying and Rising with Jesus in Everyday Life* 2019.

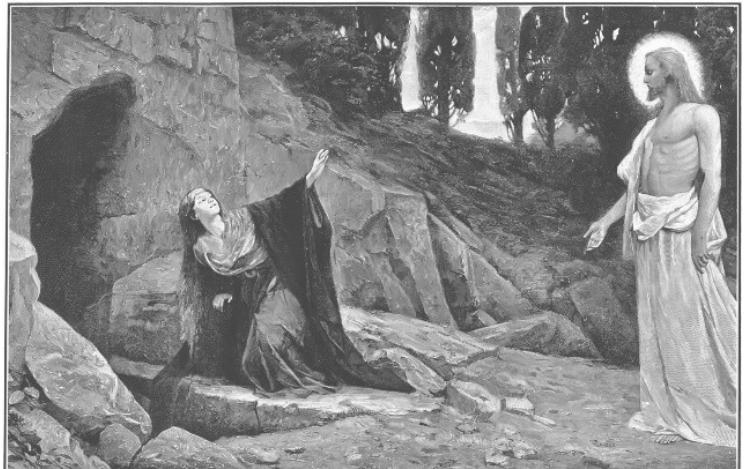


A second way of dying with Christ is repenting for our sins. This is when evil arises from without our own sinful nature. Whenever we repent of a sin, we die to that sin (Romans 8:16). We turn our back on that desire, choosing to live without it being satisfied. We ask God to help us live our lives free from that sin, not giving in to the desires that lead us to commit that kind of sin. Paul tells believers to hold “fast to the word of life” (Philippians 2:15) by doing “all things without “grumbling or disputing” (Philippians 2:14). So, we die to sin by refusing to give in to it, but we hold onto resurrection life in Christ when we free ourselves from sin. By the power of the resurrection, we will be able to live without satisfying our sinful desires. He will provide a way for us to do this. We may struggle, but He will always provide a path through the difficulty.

A third kind of dying with Christ happens when we are serving Jesus out of love for Him, but bad things happen to us when we are doing His will. Just as Jesus was rejected and despised when He was serving the Father, we may also be rejected and despised when we are obeying Him. Sometimes this is due to misunderstanding. Other times it is due to people’s sinful resistance to Christ. Whenever we die with Christ, we become freed from things that held us back from greater unity with Him. What we were striving to achieve previously will be set aside. But a greater, eternal unity with Christ will be ours. We will find that Jesus opens us up to new goals and purposes, that will take the place of old goals.

When things go badly, and we sense that a part of us has died, we can seize that time of sorrow as an opportunity to draw closer to Jesus. We can join Him in His death. Our great sorrow makes us aware of our need for His power. The parts of us that die become places where Jesus uses the power of His resurrection to give us new life. So, instead of despairing and feeling hopeless in times of loss and suffering, hold on tight to the resurrection life that is yours in Jesus. The sadness is real. It is painful. But at some point, Jesus’s resurrection will renew you with His resurrection life. If we can understand that life will follow this pattern, believers will be better equipped to face times of loss and sorrow.

Like a J-shaped curve, join Jesus in His death, and He will raise you up with Him in the power of His resurrection. Instead of “waiting for the other foot to fall,” Christians should expect to see the power that raised Jesus from the dead at work in their own lives.



Chap. Haslett

Be Like Christ (Philippians 2:1–18)

So if there is any **encouragement** in Christ, any **comfort** from **love**, any **participation** in the **Spirit**, any **affection** and **sympathy**, complete my joy by **being** of the **same mind**, having the **same love**, **being** in full accord and of one **mind**. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility **count others more** significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not **only** to his own **interests**, but **also** to the **interests of others**. Have this **mind** among yourselves, which is yours in **Christ Jesus**, who, though he was in the **form** of God, did not **count** equality with God a **thing** to **be** grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the **form** of a servant, **being** born in the likeness of men. And **being** found in human **form**, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of **death, even death** on a cross. **Therefore** God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the **name** that is above **every name**, so that at the **name of Jesus** **every** knee should bow, in heaven and on **earth** and under the **earth**, and **every** tongue confess that **Jesus Christ** is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not **only** as in my presence but much **more** in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all **things** without

grumbling or disputing, that you may **be** blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of **Christ** I may **be** proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. **Even** if I am to **be** poured out as a drink **offering** upon the sacrificial **offering** of your faith, I am **glad** and **rejoice** with you all. Likewise you **also** should **be glad** and **rejoice** with me.

(ESV) Exported from [Logos Bible Software](#).

F	T	M	O	R	E	N	M	A	D	A	L	G
U	B	I	R	B	C	O	M	F	O	R	T	N
C	J	E	V	O	L	I	L	S	Y	G	A	I
I	J	G	U	T	F	T	L	N	E	L	Y	H
C	S	N	S	H	J	A	R	G	G	L	S	T
M	T	U	T	E	Y	P	E	J	N	P	S	R
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V	I	R	S	Y	M	P	A	T	H	Y	E	T
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Why do We Struggle?

We've looked at how Christians join Christ in His death and resurrection. We mentioned that Jesus' resurrection was the beginning of a new creation, but that the new creation is invisible now. However, when Jesus returns it will become visible to everyone, both believers and non-believers. The old creation will be destroyed, and only those who are part of the new creation will remain.

In Jesus' resurrection we see how God's power transformed a dead human being into a living person. After His resurrection Jesus had a new kind of body, a resurrection body. Those who believe in Jesus are made part of the new creation by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.

Since believers are part of the new creation then why do believers still struggle with concerns about the old creation? We struggle against illness. We struggle against poverty and oppression. We even struggle against temptation to sin.

We are continuing to study the resurrection as we consider:

- What Isaiah Saw
- What Paul Saw
- Seeing What God Wants Me to See

What Isaiah Saw

In Isaiah 43:18-19 and Isaiah 65:17 prophesy of the coming new creation. In these verses we get a strong sense that old problems of this world will be gone when the new creation begins. We will be looking at two verses in Isaiah that Paul points to as being fulfilled in Christ, and in those who believe in Christ.

Isaiah 43:18-19

¹⁸ "Remember not the former things,
nor consider the things
of old.

¹⁹ Behold, I am doing a
new thing;
now it springs forth, do
you not perceive it?
I will make a way in
the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.

Isaiah 65:17

¹⁷ "For behold, I create
new heavens
and a new earth,
and the former things
shall not be
remembered
or come into mind.



Isaiah tells us that God said, "**I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?**" (Isaiah 43:19). In chapter 65 Isaiah returns to this theme, by telling us that God has said, "**I create new heavens and a new earth**" (Isaiah 65:17). To summarize, God will create a new heavens and earth. The old heavens and earth are to be forgotten. In the new creation God will cause springs of water, even rivers, to spring up in the desert. Perhaps it will be like the Garden of Eden.

In Isaiah 43 we are told that God's people will have to put all thoughts of the old creation aside. They must focus things that belong to the new creation. Deserts will become places with abundant water. To people who lived in a desert land this was a refreshing thought. Their greatest need, water, would be provided abundantly in the new creation.

Isaiah says that God will "create" a "new heavens" and a "new earth" (Isaiah 65:17). The word that Isaiah uses, translated as "create", is the very same Hebrew word used when God created the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1. This is not just a "tune up," or a "home makeover" of the current heavens and earth. This is something entirely new. In this verse Isaiah again says that the old creation will no longer be remembered.

Isaiah saw that a "new heavens" and a "new earth" was coming. Israel's struggle with its enemies would be over. Israel's struggle to put food on the table, and to find safe water to drink, would be over. At first, we might say, "Since we are living here in the old creation, this prophecy must be fulfilled in the future, because it has not been fulfilled yet." But that's not what Paul Jesus showed Paul.

What Paul

Paul claims that the verses we looked at in Isaiah are fulfilled in Christ and those who believe in him.

Paul saw this prophecy as fulfilled by Jesus Christ. You might ask, "How could Paul see this prophecy as fulfilled in Jesus Christ, when the old creation was still in existence?" You would be right in pointing out that Paul saw something different than what Isaiah saw. Paul sees everything Isaiah saw plus more. We will compare what Paul saw to what Isaiah saw. We will see that Paul says that both he and Isaiah are talking about the same thing, but Paul claims his understanding is more complete than Isaiah's understanding.

Let's take a look at 2 Corinthians 5:14-17:

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that **one has died for all, therefore all have died;** ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him **who for their sake died and was raised.**

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, **we regard no one according to the flesh.** Even though **we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.** ¹⁷ Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**

Jesus didn't die on the cross because of anything He needed for Himself. He died on the cross because all human beings had sinned, and their sin needed to be paid. Paul claims that Christ "**has died for all, therefore all have died**" (2 Corinthians 5:14). Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior has died with Him. Jesus "**died**" for "**their sake**" and "**was raised**" for "**their sake**" (2 Corinthians 5:15). His death on the cross paid for their sin (., Jesus didn't stay in the tomb. He rose again. Those who believe in Him, share in both His death, which paid the debt of sin, and in His resurrection, which gives them new life.

What may not be so clear is what Paul says about the "**new creation**" (2 Corinthians 5:17). He says that believers should "**regard no one according to the flesh**" (2 Corinthians 5:16). Paul calls the kind of thinking that belongs to the old creation, "regarding" things "**according to the flesh**" (2 Corinthians 5:16). Our physical body, or our "**flesh**" is part of the old creation. But our hearts and minds have been made new in Jesus Christ, so our thoughts do not need to belong to the old creation.

Paul "**once regarded Christ according to the flesh**" (2 Corinthians 5:16). Paul is referring to the way he thought about Jesus before Jesus appeared to him on the Road to Damascus when Paul was convertedIt's interesting that Paul says, "**we regarded**" (2 Corinthians 5:16). Remember all the people Paul is writing to are new Christians. Every one of them had come to Christ as a non-Christian. They all remembered the way they thought of Jesus before they were believed in Jesus.

Both Paul and Isaiah talk about the new heavens and the new earth. Paul draws our attention to Isaiah 43:18-19 and Isaiah 65:17. To make this very clear, I put the key verses into a chart where you can see the similarity of the words and ideas. He is making an "**allusion**" to these verses in Isaiah. That means that he is quoting not Isaiah word for word. He is using enough of the same words, so that those who know these verses by heart, will recognize that he is drawing attention to these verses.



Jesus is now seated on the throne in heaven, waiting for the time of His return to earth.

Isaiah	2 Corinthians 5:17
<p>Isaiah 43:18-19</p> <p>¹⁸ <u>Remember not the former things,</u> nor consider the things of old. ¹⁹ Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.</p> <p>Isaiah 65:17</p> <p>¹⁷ "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and <u>the former things shall not be remembered</u> or come into mind.</p>	<p>¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.</p>

Both Paul and Isaiah say that believers should think according to the ways of the new creation. Isaiah did not know that the new creation would begin with Jesus' resurrection, and the power of the resurrection would make those who believe in Jesus "new creations" in their hearts and minds.

Paul knew something that Isaiah didn't know because the risen Jesus had appeared to him. Paul knew that Jesus' resurrection was the beginning of the new creation, and that the new creation was coming in two stages. Stage 1: Believer's thoughts and hearts were transformed by the power that raised Jesus from the dead. Stage 2: The second part of the new creation will come when Christ returns. At that time the old creation will be destroyed, and the new creation will come in its full physical presence. All the prophecies are completely fulfilled in Jesus Christ, both those fulfilled by His first coming and those fulfilled by His second coming.

Both Paul and Isaiah knew about the new heavens and the new earth. And both recognized that believers needed to put aside old, sinful thinking, and think in new, holy and righteous way.

Seeing What God Wants Me to See

We struggle because we are living in the old creation but we belong to the new creation.

Isaiah was a prophet. God revealed parts of His eternal plan to Him. Jesus personally appeared to Paul. Paul also was told directly by God, about God's plans for the future.

God hasn't revealed Himself as directly to you or me. That doesn't mean that we don't experience the presence of God's peace, and that He doesn't tell us about His plans for the future.

We can read the words God gave to Isaiah and Paul in the Bible. They didn't have those words written down like we do. After all, they were the ones who wrote them down. We have a priceless gift that they didn't have. We have a Bible that we can pick up and read. We can study it to know what God has revealed.

God wants us to know that if we will come to Jesus Christ, and accept His gift of salvation, we can become "new creatures." We do not have to think the way this evil world thinks. We don't have to be motivated by selfishness. We don't have to be concerned with the respect or approval of other people. Jesus Christ, by the power of His resurrection, has made us new. Our sins are forgiven.

We still have our old, physical bodies, but our hearts have been made new by the power of Jesus' resurrection. We need to strive to use every bit of willpower that we have to put that resurrection power to work in our thoughts, words, and actions. We will never run out of possible ways to do this.

We need to think in a new way. Paul says we should take every one of our thoughts "captive."

² Corinthians 10:5 (ESV)

⁵We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

Watch the way you think! When you recognize a sinful pattern of thinking, confess your sinful thoughts to God in prayer. Ask Him to show you a new way of thinking. I suggest that Philippians 4:4-8 provides a guide so that we may "think on these things" which belong to the new creation of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 4:8 (ESV)

⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

For the **love of Christ** controls us, because we have **concluded** this: that one has **died** for all, **therefore** all have **died**; and he **died** for all, that those who **live** might no **longer live** for themselves but for him who for their **sake died** and was **raised**. From now on, **therefore**, we **regard** no one according to the **flesh**. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the **flesh**, we **regard** him thus no **longer**. Therefore, if **anyone** is in Christ, he is a new **creation**. The old has **passed away**; behold, the new has **come**.

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

Philippians 4:4–8

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

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

(ESV)

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Genesis 1:26–28 (ESV)

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Where Did We Go Wrong?

I did a Google search on the word “image.” I found two hair salons in the area that use the word in their name. One construction company also uses the word in its name. I found an article on “image recognition software.” There was a section of definitions: “Image: An image is a visual representation of something.” And, there’s even a mathematical definition of “image.” I didn’t know that. And, I’m not sure I understand what it is.

When the Bible says that human beings were created in “God’s image” what does that mean? In nature, a person can see their own image reflected on the surface of still waters. That understanding of image is familiar to us and was also familiar to the people in Bible times. Could we be created to reflect God’s image, in the way that a still surface of water can reflect our image? Let’s stick with that idea.

Now consider that when Adam and Eve sinned, they failed to reflect God’s image. God created them to bear His image, but they didn’t do it. Neither did their descendants, who were created by God to bear His image. Why? Because when a person doesn’t worship God, that person ceases to bear the image of God as God intended. They can’t reflect God’s image if they have no relationship with God.

Perhaps deep in our hearts we have a need to bear the image of God, but we can’t do it because that part of us is broken. What do human beings do with that deep longing in their hearts? They pursue and worship false gods. In ancient times they made idols of stone, metal, and wood. In modern times they may pursue pleasures, making themselves to be like God. Or, they spend all their time and energy chasing after dreams of fame and fortune, seeking to be adored, and worshipped, by other people. All of these things are different forms of idolatry, pursuing and worshipping a false god. The tricky thing about adoration is that human beings become obsessed with what they adore. They come to resemble the object of their adoration. They come to bear its image. This is true when people worship false gods, as well as when people worship the true God. When people worship a false God, they bear its image and become like the false god. When those who believe in Jesus worship God, because Jesus has made them new they can bear God’s image.

People become like what they worship. That is how worship changes us. Where did humanity go wrong? They failed to reflect the image of God, as God had created them to do.

This week we will study:

- Adam and Eve failed to bear the image of God
- Worship causes people to bear the image of what they worship
- Jesus makes believers new; so, they can bear the image of God

Adam and Eve Failed to Bear the Image of God

Let's see how human beings became unable to reflect the image of God. Afterall, God created humans in His image, to reflect the reality of His presence with them. We will see what went wrong.

We will look at a familiar passage of scripture.

Genesis 1:26–28 (ESV)

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

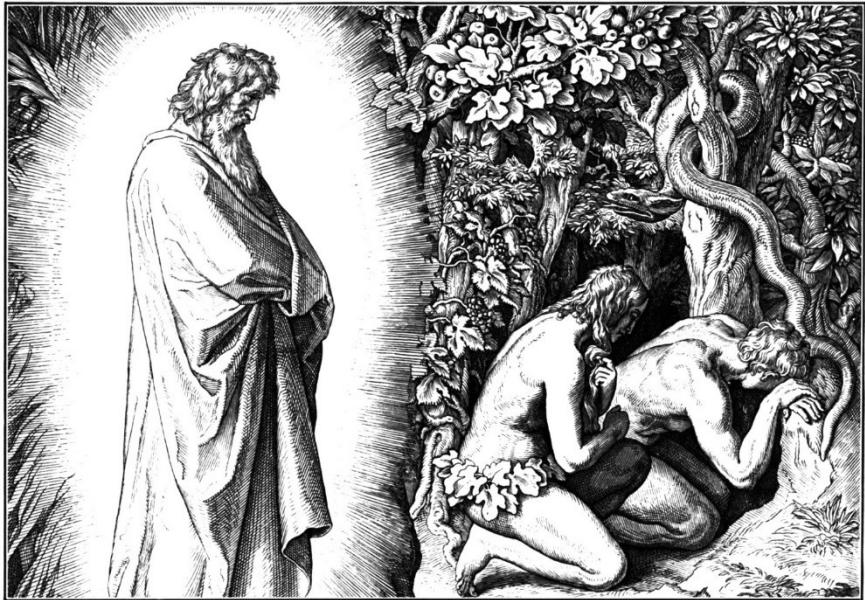
²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

God gave Adam and Eve a command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28), to bring the earth under God’s full authority through them. God’s plan was that their descendants, who reflected the image of God, would fill the earth. Because they bore the image of God, the presence, and glory of God, would have filled the earth.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they didn’t fulfill God’s plan. Instead of trusting God, they trusted the serpent. Instead of driving the invading serpent out of Eden, they welcomed him. Instead of ruling over the serpent, they allowed the serpent to rule over them. Instead of bringing the glory of God’s presence throughout the earth, they were cast out of God’s presence, and could no longer bear God’s image. They couldn’t bear God’s image because they were no longer in fellowship with God.

God told Adam and Eve what would happen (Genesis 2:16&17), but they didn’t believe God. Instead, they took the word of the serpent, and trusted the serpent’s words over the word of God.

When Adam and Eve obeyed the serpent, and gave in to temptation, they became like the serpent. The serpent lied to them by saying, “You will not surely die” (Genesis 3:4). He denied what God had told them, “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17). But when God asked Adam if he ate from the tree, Adam avoided a direct answer. He said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate” (Genesis 3:12). Instead of accepting responsibility for his sin Adam blamed Eve for giving him the fruit. And, Adam blamed God for giving him Eve who tempted him. Adam did not admit what he did, or take responsibility for it. He was deceptive like the serpent. In that way, he was like the serpent.



Was this idolatry? There weren’t any idols involved. In fact, in the Garden of Eden, no one would have made an idol because it was a holy place belonging to the one, true God. It is true that no idols were involved. On the other hand, the sin of idolatry involves rejecting God’s right to be worshipped, and putting something else in His place. That did take place, when Adam and Eve believed the word of the serpent over the word of God. Maybe they didn’t worship the serpent, but they certainly were not worshipping God as they should. It was humanity’s first step toward idolatry.

Adam could have become like God by obeying God, bearing God's image. Instead, Adam gave himself the authority to distinguish right from wrong, overruling God. The serpent called this becoming "like God" (Genesis 3:3). But it was becoming God in a bad way. Only God has the ultimate authority to decide what is right and what is wrong. When Adam overruled God's command, Adam rejected God's right to decide right from wrong, and gave that authority to himself. As we know, when every human being thinks he or she has the right to decide what is right and what is wrong, disagreement and chaos result. We can thank Adam for getting humanity started in this direction.

Worship causes people to bear the image of what they worship

Whenever a person has a great love and devotion for another person or for a specific goal, it shapes their character, and their life. The Bible makes it quite clear, that we become like what we most adore. In other, more biblical words, we will come to bear the image of what we worship.

Throughout the Bible we are told that people become like the idols that they worship. Psalm 115:8 says, "Those who make [idols] become like them". In Isaiah 6, God says that God's chosen people have become like idols whose eyes cannot see and ears cannot hear. They "keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeking, but do not perceive" (Isaiah 6:9).

When Moses was on Mount Sinai with God, Aaron made a golden calf, an idol, which they worshipped. The



Israelites became like cattle, needing someone to lead them. Due to their disobedience of worshipping the golden calf the Israelites are referred to as being like cattle. They are characterized as cattle that are "stiff necked" and will not obey (Exodus 32:9; cf. 33:3, 5; 34:9). Like cattle that have broken loose, they "turned aside quickly out of the way [God] commanded them" to follow (Exodus 32:8). Moses had to gather them together again, like cattle on the loose (Exodus 32:26). Only then was Moses able to "lead the people to the place about which" God had revealed to Moses (Exodus 32:34). Later, in Hosea 4:16, Israel is again compared to being like cattle, "Like a stubborn heifer Israel is stubborn".

God's people, were supposed to bring glory to God, and in turn, God would cause His glory to shine among them. Instead, they worshipped idols, causing God to say, "my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit" (Jeremiah 2:11).

Think of a person who seeks "fame and glory" and in the process turns away from everything that would glorify God. Just like the people in the Old Testament, "God will change their glory to shame" (Hosea 4:7). We must "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). Only then will God cause His glory to shine in our lives.

Jesus makes believers new; so, they can bear the image of God

We've seen that the Old Testament teaches that people become like the object of their worship. That is how worship can change people for the worse. A person who worships a lifeless idol, an object of the created world, instead of the creator of the world, in time will become as lifeless as the object that is worshipped. That person will be spiritually dead. Now we will see what Paul, in the New Testament, teaches about how Jesus can change people into those who bear God's image well. He starts by transforming their minds and hearts.

Paul goes to considerable lengths to show us how Jesus reverses the effect of idolatry. Take a look at the chart below.

Romans 1:24 -28	Romans 12:1-2
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²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,

²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

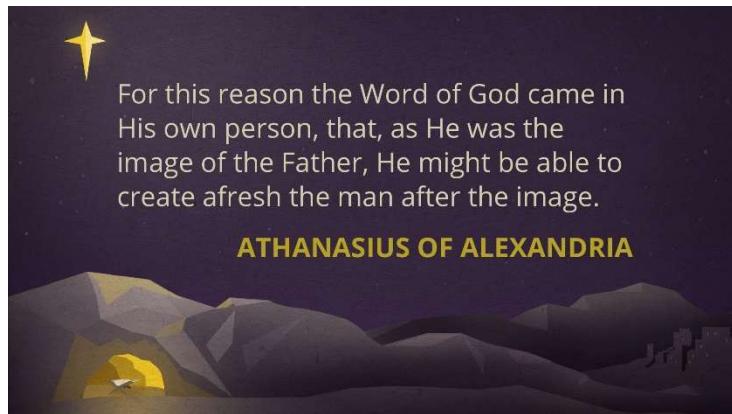
¹I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Paul explains that when people chose to worship a “creature” instead of the “Creator” (Romans 1:25) that God let them run loose. He “gave them up” to follow “the lusts of their hearts” (Romans 1:24). Like Adam, “they exchanged the truth about God for a lie” (Romans 1:25). Instead of drawing them back to Himself, “God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done” (Romans 1:28). God allowed them to continue in their sins.

Later, in chapter 12, Paul explains that when people believe in Jesus that they are made new. Instead of “dishonoring their bodies” (Romans 1:24), like those who worship idols, they “present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Romans 12:1). This act of “spiritual worship” causes them to no longer be “conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2), because they are able to “die” to their sin. Miraculously, they are able to share in Jesus’ death. Because they can share in Jesus’ death on the cross they can be freed from bondage to sin.



Believers also share in Jesus’ resurrection. They are “transformed” from death to life. This happens by “the renewal” of the believer’s “mind” (Romans 12:2). Instead of seeking to satisfy sinful desires, believers’ minds can reliably “discern the will of God” (Romans 12:2). This comes primarily by prayerfully reading and studying the Bible, letting the Holy Spirit convict believers of sin, and setting them free from the bondage of sin. Through this process the hearts of believers become aligned with the heart of Jesus. This is how believers begin to bear the image of God, and reflect the image of God through their lives.

Chasing after the things of this world is a form of idolatry. It involves worshipping what was created instead of the Creator. This spiritual idolatry will cause you to die spiritually, because you will become like the object you worship. It cannot give you life. It will take your life from you. But if you come to Christ, and receive His gift of new life, then you will be transformed and able to bear the image of God. People will see God’s glory at work in you.

Look carefully at the chart above. Is your mind being transformed by God, or is your mind more like Adam’s and the Israelites, when they disobeyed God? Is your mind focused on yourself and your desires? Remember, you become like what you worship.

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

Then God said, “Let us **make** man in our **image**, after our **likeness**. And let them have **dominion** over the **fish** of the sea and over the **birds** of the **heavens** and over the **livestock** and over all the **earth** and over **every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.**” So God **created** man in his own **image**, in the **image** of God he **created** him; **male** and **female** he **created** them. And God **blessed** them. And God **said** to them, “Be **fruitful** and **multiply** and **fill** the **earth** and **subdue** it, and have **dominion** over the **fish** of the sea and over the **birds** of the **heavens** and over **every living thing that moves on the earth.**” And God **said**, “**Behold**, I have **given** you **every plant** yielding **seed** that is on the **face** of all the **earth**, and **every tree** with **seed** in its **fruit**. You shall have them for **food**.

(ESV)

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A New Creation Has Begun, Indeed!

God will create a New Heavens and a New Earth. The old heavens will be rolled up like a scroll (Isaiah 34:4; Revelation 6:14) and taken away. Jesus had to die on the cross and rise from the dead, before that could begin to take place. His resurrection shows that it has already begun.

When Jesus rose from the dead, His resurrection inaugurated a New Creation. "He is the beginning" (Colossians 1:18) of that New Creation. Jesus' resurrection made Him the first human being to die and then to be "born" into the New Creation. His dead body was like a seed that became something new and different from His previous physical body (1 Corinthians 15:37&38). He was the Creator of this heavens and earth (Colossians 1:16), and He is also the "firstborn" of the New Heavens and the New Earth (Colossians 1:18). That New Creation has not yet fully come into existence. But when it does fully arrive, "in everything" Jesus Christ will "be preeminent" (Colossians 1:18) "On his robe" will be "written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Revelation 19:16).

Perhaps you never thought of Resurrection Sunday as the beginning of the New Heavens and New Earth. Yet, it marks the beginning of a whole New World, where "the wolf and the lion will graze together" (Isaiah 11:6 & 65:25). "Swords" will be "beaten into pruning hooks" (Isaiah 2:4). God, Himself, "will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things [will have] passed away" Revelation 21:4 (ESV). It began with Jesus' resurrection. It will come in its fullness when He returns.

Like Jesus' disciples, you may ask, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of [Jesus'] coming and of the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:3 ESV; see also Mark 13:4 and Luke 21:7). Jesus' answer was, "Concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only" (Matt. 24:36 ESV). We would like to know, but we will have to wait. Until it is happening, we cannot know.

In the future, this heaven and earth will pass away (Psalm 102:25-28; Isaiah 24:19-23; Matthew 5:18; 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33; 2 Peter 3:7, 10, 12; Revelation 21:1). But until then, the powers of evil are at war in this current creation. The "adversary" known as "the devil prowls around looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). At the very beginning of His earthly ministry Jesus entered into battle with the devil. In fact, "Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matt. 4:1 NAS). This was not a time of Jesus retreating from the devil. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into battle against the devil, to defeat the devil. Three times the devil tried to persuade Jesus to forsake His mission, and surrender. All three times Jesus did not surrender but was victorious, and the devil was the one who was defeated. From that point forward Jesus drove out evil spirits whenever He encountered them, repeatedly showing that He had power to command and defeat them. When the power of the devil held the hearts of political and religious leaders, Jesus repeatedly revealed their foolishness. In the end, they played into Jesus' hand. They thought they could defeat Jesus by killing Him on a cross but He still had a mission to complete.

Hidden deep in God's plan for Jesus' mission to save the world, was a mystery, a truth known to God, but not known to men. God had been providing hints of what He was going to do throughout the centuries before Jesus came.

Long, long before Jesus came to earth, God told Adam and Eve that a descendant of Eve's would crush the head of a descendant of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). That was a pretty mysterious statement! But, in fact, Jesus, a descendant of Eve, was crucified on the cross by those under the devil's influence, descendants of the serpent. On Friday, the devil must have considered himself victorious. Surely, he thought, he had crushed Jesus, once and for all. But on Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead! The devil had not considered that the author of life might not stay dead when He was crucified. It was the serpent's head that was crushed, and only the heel of Jesus was wounded. Jesus arose!

For those of us who believe in Jesus' resurrection, and put our faith in Him as Savior, should consider the words of Paul: "¹²The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light" (Rom. 13:12-14 NAS). When we die with Christ and rise to new life in Christ (Romans 6:3-4), we must recognize that we are no longer to live a life of sinfulness. We must live as Jesus lived. And as He taught His disciples to live: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33)

Jesus Christ is risen! All who receive Him as Savior will live with Him forever (John 6:51&58; 1 Timothy 6:12; Titus 3:7; 1 John 1:1-3; 1 John 2:25; 1 John 5:11&12).

Jesus Christ is risen indeed!

crucified cloths body things risen dead dazzling went Magdalene Jesus first Peter early tale seemed spices prepared day hands stood looking two men told Mary apparel mother rose stone women how happened

Galilee saw Lord not seek Joanna week Son other delivered linen believe here words ground here bowed all Man said tomb dawn James idle ran

returning find still rest away found home behold

Remember
 stooping home

saw Lord not seek Joanna week Son other delivered linen believe here words ground here bowed all Man said tomb dawn James idle ran

returning find still rest away found home behold

Remember
 stooping home

Luke 24:1–12 (ESV)

The Resurrection

24 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. ⁵ And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” ⁸ And they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, ¹¹ but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

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



Matthew's Account of a New Creation

The image of God in humanity was damaged by sin. Worshipping idols further damaged the image of God in humanity by causing people to resemble what they worshipped; having ears that do not hear and eyes that do not see (Psalm 135:16). The Gospel of Matthew shows that Jesus, as the Savior of the world, caused those who believed in Him to be able to bear the image of God and to become a new creation.

We will look at three descriptions of Jesus' life and ministry that I will call "drum rolls." Like rolling drums signal that something important is about to happen, these descriptions of Jesus' life and ministry prepare the reader to understand that Jesus is going to create a new heavens and earth. That act of creation will begin when Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.

In this study we will consider three "drum rolls":

- Authority to create a new genesis.
- Authority to cast our evil.
- Authority to save the world.

Authority to Create a New Genesis

The book of Genesis in the Old Testament is about new beginnings. Matthew's Gospel identifies itself as an account of a new genesis, or a new beginning.

The book of Genesis calls itself the "book of genesis" in Genesis 5:1, we read: "This is the book of the generations of Adam..."

(ESV). **Genesis 5:1** could be translated, "the 'book of the genealogy' or the 'book of beginning' or the 'book of genesis'". **Matthew 1:1** says something very similar to Genesis 5:1, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." It is also about a new beginning. Matthew's Gospel tells us about a new genesis, or a new creation. Jesus' birth and His genealogical record highlight His connection to both God and Adam. The new Beginning came through Jesus' death and resurrection. The **genealogy of Jesus served as a "drum roll"** preparing readers to understand that Jesus' death and resurrection was the beginning of a new heavens and new earth. As part of that new creation, Jesus caused those who believe in Him to be newly made into the image of God.



Authority to Cast Out Evil

When Jesus also cast evil spirits out of people living in Israel is was another “drum roll” preparing for the time when He would make all things new. After His baptism, “Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Matthew 4:1). The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by “the devil”. Jesus wasn’t trapped by the devil. It was a strategic plan to confront the devil. As a result of the confrontation, the devil was defeated by Jesus, three times. Each time Jesus was tempted by the devil He quoted an Old Testament passage. Jesus overcame each temptation by trusting in the words of God. The temptations of Jesus parallel Adam and Eve’s temptation in the Garden of Eden. But where Adam and Eve failed, Jesus was victorious. Once again, the Gospel story is presented as laying the foundation for a new creation.

When Jesus confronted the priests and the Pharisees, He called them hypocrites. He went out of His way to accuse them of not practicing what they preached. He was accusing them of being evil. That was also part of purifying the land of evil. One of the most heinous sins of these leaders is that they accused Jesus of being from Satan, when, in fact, they were the ones who were serving Satan.

After His baptism, Jesus re-entered the land and began casting out evil, in the form of demons who possessed people living there. He was purifying the land as a “drum roll” preparing for the coming of His new creation, which began when He died on the cross and rose again. Again, we see that as Jesus began His new creation, He made those who believed in Him into a new creation with the ability to bear the image of God.



Authority to Save the World

The third “drum roll” is Jesus’ claim to be the “Son of Man.” Those who didn’t accept Jesus as the Messiah failed to recognize His claim to authority when He called Himself “the Son of Man.” But those who believed He was the Messiah recognized that Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah who would have authority over all the earth as described in Daniel 7.

In Daniel 7 we find a prophecy about the “Son of Man”. In the four Gospel accounts, Jesus refers to Himself about 80 times as the “son of man,” more than any other title He used for Himself. Yet, in the Gospel accounts, not once does someone other than Jesus, refer to Him as the “son of man.” Considering that Jesus used this name for Himself so frequently, we should try to understand the significance of the phrase “son of man” and its relationship to Jesus’ mission to save humanity from sin.

Take a look at Daniel 7:13-14:

¹³ “I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.

¹⁴ And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed.

(Daniel 7:13-14, ESV)

Daniel 7:13-14 says that the Son of Man is given “dominion and glory and a kingdom”. He will have authority over “all peoples, nations and languages.” People all over the earth will “serve him.” His rule, or “dominion” will be “everlasting.” It will “not pass away” or “be destroyed”.

Daniel also speaks of the “son of man” coming “with the clouds of heaven” (Daniel 7:13). This term combines both Jesus’ human nature and His divine nature. In Isaiah 19:1 we read “The Lord rideth on a swift cloud.” Coming down out of heaven, from the clouds, was something only God did. In Daniel 7:14 the “son of man” is described as having “dominion” so that “all peoples, nations and language should serve him.” He has “glory and a kingdom.” He is described as one who will rule the earth forever. Yet, Jesus says that the “son of man” did not come to “be served” but “so serve.” Jesus is explaining that He is using the authority God the Father has given to Him not to rule the earth, on this time that He comes to earth, but to save the earth from sin. When Jesus returns, it will be different. Then, all will serve Him. He

will rule the earth. We see this part of Jesus rule described in Revelation 19:11-16 when Jesus will come at the end of the age to judge and rule the nations.

We have seen that when Jesus claimed to be “the Son of Man” He was claiming authority over the earth. This claim of authority over the earth was a “drum roll” preparing people who believed in Jesus to recognize that Jesus’ death and resurrection was the beginning of a new creation. Once again, we understand that Jesus will make those who believe in Him into new creatures who will bear the image of God.

Conclusion

When Jesus Christ died and rose again, He began a new creation of a new heavens and a new earth. Most of the change that took place is in the form of spiritual transformation of those who believe in Him. Their hearts and minds are transformed to be more like Jesus’ own heart and mind. We often speak of being “born again” but we don’t often connect our new birth with the new creation that Jesus has begun. Another part of being made a part of Jesus’ new creation is that believers now can function as “the image of God.” Jesus causes believers to be able to reflect His love and righteousness. As Christians share this message wherever they go throughout the world (Matthew 28:19-20), they can help to fill the earth with God’s glory. This was God’s plan for Adam and Eve and those who followed. Because of Jesus death and resurrection, God is using believers to carry out His plan.

This is a very high calling for all believers. If you believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior then Jesus is making you into a person who, like Himself, reflects the image of God. He desires that your words and actions will reflect Jesus, so that it will become clear to everyone that you reflect the love and righteousness of Jesus. Living life this way, in a world filled with sin and temptation, is an ongoing struggle. But Jesus assures all who believe in Him that He is always with them (Matthew 28:20).



When Jesus returns He will defeat His enemies once and for all.

Matthew 1:1–16

N	J	B	O	A	Z	J	C	L	V	K	N	V	O	The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ , the son of David , the son of Abraham . Abraham was the father of Isaac , and Isaac the father of Jacob , and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers , and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar , and Perez the father of Hezron , and Hezron the father of Ram , and Ram the father of Amminadab , and Amminadab the father of Nahshon , and Nahshon the father of Salmon , and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab , and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth , and Obed the father of Jesse , and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah , and Solomon the father of Rehoboam , and Rehoboam the father of Abijah , and Abijah the father of Asaph , and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat , and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram , and Joram the father of Uzziah , and Uzziah the father of Jotham , and Jotham the
N	O	M	L	A	S	U	S	E	J	O	R	A	M	
H	T	M	H	I	D	D	Z	E	R	I	T	A	Y	
J	H	A	O	I	E	A	C	Z	K	S	N	B	A	
R	A	H	V	L	P	H	E	L	I	A	K	I	M	
Z	M	A	O	B	O	H	E	R	S	A	R	U	O	
U	D	R	R	N	R	S	H	S	R	C	H	D	S	
C	T	B	I	C	T	C	E	N	E	H	M	P	A	
I	T	A	H	P	A	H	S	O	H	E	J	J	S	
S	H	E	A	L	T	I	E	L	T	Z	R	O	F	
Z	E	R	E	P	I	A	B	Y	O	E	U	S	A	
N	A	H	S	H	O	N	S	B	R	K	M	I	T	
M	A	M	M	I	N	A	D	A	B	I	J	A	H	
E	S	S	E	J	A	C	O	B	P	A	V	H	E	
I	T	J	K	H	D	E	B	O	V	H	S	N	R	

father of **Ahaz**, and **Ahaz** the **father** of **Hezekiah**, and **Hezekiah** the **father** of **Manasseh**, and **Manasseh** the **father** of **Amos**, and **Amos** the **father** of **Josiah**, and **Josiah** the **father** of **Jechoniah** and his **brothers**, at the time of the **deportation** to **Babylon**. And after the **deportation** to **Babylon**: **Jechoniah** was the **father** of **Shealtiel**, and **Shealtiel** the **father** of **Zerubbabel**, and **Zerubbabel** the **father** of **Abiud**, and **Abiud** the **father** of **Eliakim**, and **Eliakim** the **father** of **Azor**, and **Azor** the **father** of **Zadok**, and **Zadok** the **father** of **Achim**, and **Achim** the **father** of **Eliud**, and **Eliud** the **father** of **Eleazar**, and **Eleazar** the **father** of **Matthan**, and **Matthan** the **father** of **Jacob**, and **Jacob** the **father** of **Joseph** the husband of **Mary**, of whom **Jesus** was born, who is called **Christ**.

(ESV)



Colossians 3:8–10 (ESV)

⁸But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Paul Urged Believers to Reflect God's Image

Paul changed forever when Jesus appeared to him on the Road to Damascus. Paul saw Jesus in His glorious majesty. He saw something different in Jesus from what the disciples had seen as they walked through the countryside with Him. They had known Jesus before He died on the cross and rose again. Their experience with the risen Jesus was profound, but they had spent a great deal of time with Jesus before His death and resurrection.

Paul had a different perspective. He never knew Jesus as a man who dripped with sweat in the heat, grew hungry after a long journey, or asked for a drink of water. Paul only knew Jesus as the exalted, risen Lord, who sits at the right hand of God in Heaven (Romans 8:34, Colossians 3:1).

Because of Paul's unique perspective of Jesus, he emphasized that Jesus is the "last Adam" more than any other New Testament writer. Paul emphasized Jesus' ability to make believers reflect the glory and righteousness of Jesus. Jesus is the perfect image of God. Therefore, those who reflect Jesus' image are also reflecting the image of God.

In this study we will look at how Paul taught believers to:

- Put off the corrupted "image of God"
- Put on the perfect "image of God"
- Let Jesus shine in you

Put Off the Corrupted "Image of God"

Those who believe in Jesus have removed the old, corrupted, sinful nature with its damaged image of God. Take a look at Colossians 3:8&9:

⁸But now you must **put them** all **away**: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have **put off** the **old self** with its **practices**

Paul describes the identity of a sinful human being as “**the old self**” with its sinful behavior (Colossians 3:8&9). Like taking off a coat, a believer must “**put ... away**” and “**put off**” their old sinful “**practices**”. Think of a filthy, tattered coat that gives off a terrible smell. The only way to be free of its smell is to take it off and get rid of it.

How can a person who believes in Jesus put away or put off old, sinful actions? Jesus Christ, who had authority over all creation can use His power and authority create believers as new creatures. When Jesus “saves” believers He creates a new image of God in them so that they can reflect Jesus, who is the perfect image of God.

Put on the Perfect “Image of God”

When Jesus died and rose again, He saved sinners by making them new again. Their corrupted image of God was made new. Because Jesus was the creator of the physical world, in which we live, He had the ability to begin a new creation, where those who receive His salvation, believing in Him, will be able to reflect the glory and righteousness of Jesus, the perfect image of God.

We now return to Paul’s metaphor about taking off an old, smelly coat. The believer’s next step must put be to put on Jesus like a new coat. Take a look at Colossians 3:10:

¹⁰ and have **put on the new self**, which is **being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator**.

Paul says believers are to take off the old sinful self, and “**put on the new self**.” That new self is “**being renewed in knowledge**”. Fill yourself with the knowledge of who Jesus is! Believers must study the Bible, the word of God, and absorb the truth of who Jesus is. The Holy Spirit guides believers in their study of the scripture, but believers must first make the effort to read the Bible, including memorizing key verses that help them to overcome sin.

This “**knowledge**” isn’t merely head knowledge. Believers aren’t supposed to gain all this understanding so that they can win more arguments. The primary reason for believers to gain more knowledge of Jesus, is to be “**renewed**” in “**the image of**” their “**creator**,” Jesus the Son of God.

Just as God created Adam in His image, Jesus creates believers in His image. Jesus is the perfect, complete, full image of God – because He is the Son of God, who is God. That is how believers are able to come to reflect God’s glory, they become the image of Jesus, who is the perfect image of God.

Next, we will see how Paul describes this disciplined process of becoming more and more like Jesus in all we say and do.

Let Jesus Shine in You

Believers are actually able to reflect Jesus’ presence in their lives. Paul says that when a person believes in Christ that a “veil is removed” (2 Corinthians 3:16). Moses’ face would glow with the glory of God when he was in the presence of God. But after a period of time his face would stop glowing. He started wearing a veil so that the people wouldn’t know when his face stopped glowing (Exodus 34:33&35). As a result, they never knew if Moses’ face was glowing or not.

Paul also refers to another veil that is mentioned in the Old Testament. In the Temple and in the Tabernacle, priests were separated from God’s presence by a veil. Paul is saying that for those who believe in Jesus there is no veil that separates them from God. However, Paul says, for the Jewish people who hear the words of Moses read in synagogues and in the Temple in Jerusalem, there is a veil that separates them. They have God’s word, but their lack of knowledge of Jesus prevents them from understanding God’s word. On the other hand, those who believe in Jesus Christ are transformed by their knowledge of Jesus (Colossians 3:10), and they dwell in the presence of God at all times. For those who believe in Jesus, there is no veil.

This leads to what Paul has to say in 1 Corinthians 4:1-6:

⁴Therefore, having this **ministry** by the mercy of God, we do **not lose heart**. ²But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to **tamper with God's word**, but by the open statement of the truth we would **commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God**. ³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴In their case **the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God**. ⁵For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. ⁶For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” **has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**.

Paul does “**not lose heart**” because he knows that because of his **ministry** believers will be transformed and reflect the image of Christ. “**We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways**”. They will no longer “**tamper with**

God's word." What they will do is "commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God." Believers know God is watching. They pray that God will awaken people to their sinfulness. If people do not already believe, they are told to seek the forgiveness of Christ, and receive His gift of salvation. If people do believe, they are told to confess their sin, and change their ways.

Paul recognizes that not everyone will accept his message. He says, that "even if our gospel is veiled" it is hidden only to those who don't believe. This is because "it is veiled to those who are perishing". If God has not called a person to come to Jesus the message of the Gospel will not make any sense. They won't understand it. Paul says that "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God". Satan blinded them. Their idolatry of pleasing sinful desires, makes them unable to see the "light of the gospel." Paul says that the gospel is "the glory of Christ". The word glory refers to light shining. The "glory" and "light" of the Gospel is the "light" and "glory" of Christ. That's because the Gospel is how a person comes to have Jesus Christ's presence dwelling within them. It is proof that the image of God is working as it should. Jesus reflects the glory of God. Believers reflect the glory of Christ. That is only possible because the image of God in Jesus and in believers is functioning correctly.

We live in a world darkened by sin. But the light of Christ shines within us. His light "has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". This is almost a repeat of what Paul said in Colossians 3:10. Believers know Jesus for who He is. By believing that Jesus is who He claims to be, the believers' knowledge of Christ and faith in Christ becomes the switch that turns on the light of Christ at work in their lives. Like Moses, who came before God without a veil, those who believe in Jesus, come to Him and see that His face is glowing. In turn the believer glows with the glory of Jesus.

When people say that they believe in Jesus Christ it should show. There should be an indication that the glory of Jesus is at work in their lives. They should talk in a way that reflects their relationship to Jesus. They should act in a way that reflects their relationship with Jesus. That doesn't mean they will never sin, but when they do sin, they will confess that sin and move on to obedience to God. What will be most evident in that person's life is the presence of Jesus Christ in what they say and do.

Conclusion

Paul makes many statements about Jesus being the last Adam in the New Testament. He wants his readers to know that Jesus is the perfect image of God. The first Adam failed to reflect the image of God. In addition to being the perfect image of God, Jesus is also the Creator. Jesus existed before creation and created the heavens and the earth (Colossians 1:16&17). He has the power and authority to give believers the ability to reflect His image. Before believing in Jesus, believers were unable to reflect God's image. After believing in Jesus, they are able to reflect His image, the perfect, full image of God.

At the beginning of his letter to the church in Colossae Paul writes that Jesus is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). He goes on to say that in Jesus "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Colossians 1:19). Even though Adam and Eve had been created in the image of God, there never was any sense that the "fullness of God dwelled in" them. Not only did the fullness of God dwell in Jesus it was "pleased to dwell" in Him. Paul urges believers to take an active part in reflecting the reality of Jesus in their lives.

So, how are you doing with this? Are you showing by your words and actions that Jesus' light shines in your life? If His light is shining through you, then you are bearing the image of God well. People see Jesus in you. That glorifies God!

But if you realize that you aren't showing Jesus Christ at all, in anything that you do, then you need to come to Christ. You need to ask Him to forgive you for your sin. You need to ask Him to make you a new person so that you can reflect His presence in your life.

What if sometimes you reflect the presence of Jesus only some of the time? That means you are a work in progress. You know what you need to do because at least some of the time you are reflecting the reality of Jesus in your life. Confess your sins. Receive Jesus' gift of forgiveness. Let the next step you take be a step of obedience to God. Continue doing that. Jesus will be with you every step you take.



A artist's conception of Saul's vision of Jesus on the Road to Damascus, before his name was changed to Saul.

Colossians 3:8–10

But now you must put them all **away**: **anger**, wrath, **malice**, **slander**, and **obscene** talk from your **mouth**. Do not lie to one **another**, **seeing** that you have put off the old **self** with its **practices** and have put on the new **self**, which is **being renewed in knowledge** after the **image** of its **creator**.

(ESV)

Exported from [Logos Bible Software](#).

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

Paul explains that when a human being is born into this world the child that is born inherits “the image of the man of dust” (1 Corinthians 15:49). The man of dust, is Adam, whom “God formed the man of dust from the ground” (Genesis 2:7). Paul is pointing out that Adam was a sinner, and at birth we inherit his image, which is of a sinful human being. However, those who come to Christ “bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:49). Jesus fills the role that Adam filled, as the image bearer. Those who bear the image of Adam, will “die” (1 Corinthians 15:22). Those who bear the image of Christ, will “be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). Through Adam “came death”, but through Christ “has come ... the resurrection from the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:21).

As creatures who were created in God’s image, human beings have the potential to reflect the God’s glory. In the Old Testament, when Moses met with God on Mount Sinai, his face gave off light (Exodus 34:29, 30, 35; 2 Corinthians 3:7).

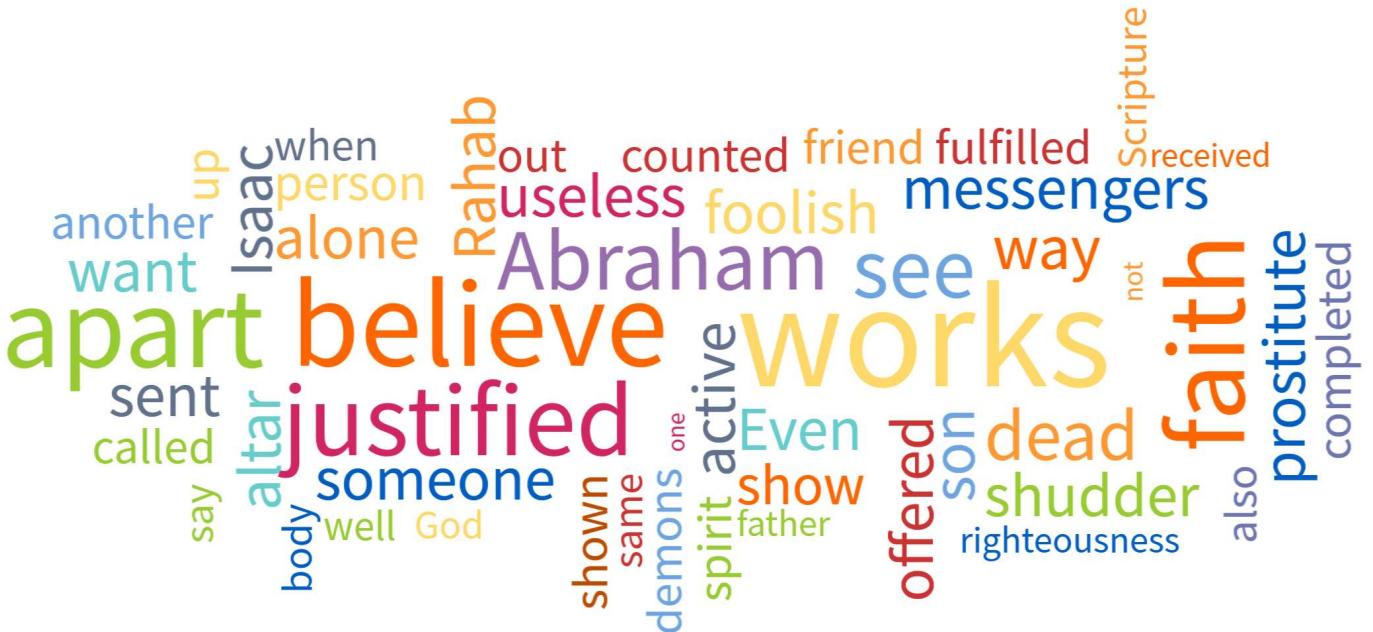
Christ now shines “in [the] hearts” of those who believe in Jesus. That gives believers “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). Believers have the power of Jesus’ resurrection, a “treasure” in their frail bodies, which Paul calls “jars of clay” (2 Corinthians 4:7). Like Moses’ glowing face, believers glow with the presence of Christ, not by talking to God on a mountain, but by having Christ abiding within them.

Those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior carry with them, everywhere they go, the image of Jesus Christ. We become a “light of the world” when we carry the image of our Savior and God. We extend the boundaries of His Kingdom with us as we go into the world.

Paul experienced what it was like to show the glory of Jesus Christ in a sinful world. Speaking in terms of his everyday life of persecution for his faith, Paul says, “⁸We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹ For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you.” Or in other words, we are being created into a new person, having not only the potential to reflect God’s glory, but actually living out the experience of shining out with the glory of Christ within our hearts” (2 Corinthians 4:8-12, ESV).

Even when surrounded by opposition to God, believers have the power of the living Christ. By dying with Christ they experience the power of His resurrection delivering them from death to life. In everyday terms, they are knocked down “but not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4:9).

We might like to think that life would be better if we did not have to suffer at all. But in this world, until Jesus returns, everyone will experience suffering. Those who believe in Jesus face this suffering with the knowledge that they are never alone, Christ has suffered before them. They also know that the day of Jesus’ return is coming, and then, suffering will end. In the meantime, they cling tightly to Jesus, who is their Savior.



Justification

Five hundred years ago, on April 18, 1521, a monk named Martin Luther was put on trial for teaching that Christians are saved by faith alone. Discussions about justification were not new. But over the centuries most Christians had come to believe that a Christian's good works would be judged, by God, to see if a Christian merited salvation. This understanding was almost universal at the time, but Martin Luther brought that understanding into dispute. Martin Luther was found guilty and condemned. However, because of the teaching of Martin Luther, the teaching of justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ, and not by works, has become almost universally accepted among Protestant Christians today. We will turn to the Bible to explain why this understanding still holds up to scrutiny of what the Bible teaches.

When Adam and Eve sinned their relationship with God was broken. God did not give up on humanity. He later called Noah, who fell into sin. God also called Abraham, and Abraham's descendants, the nation of Israel. But the Israelites also fell into sin and God had to send the nation into captivity. God promised a remnant would return, and a remnant did return. There were promises that God would drive evil out of the land. But many of those promises had not been fulfilled.

The Jewish people hoped that a Savior, or Messiah would come. But when the Messiah came most of them did not recognize Him. Some believed that Jesus was the Messiah and the Savior of the world. Jesus' death on the cross paid the price of sin (Colossians 2:14), and everyone who believes in Jesus' death and resurrection will be saved (Romans 10:9). Since all have sinned (Romans 3:23), everyone needs to be saved by Jesus.

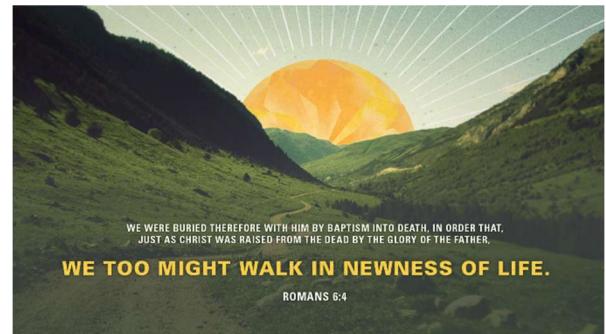
No one can save themselves (Romans 3:20). Jesus redeemed sinners (Romans 3:24). His blood, shed on the cross, paid the price (Romans 3:25). The process of forgiving sinners by faith in Jesus is called “justification.”

This week we will focus on the Protestant understanding of the New Testament teaching of “justification.” How does the Bible’s teaching about “justification” fit into Jesus making all things new? To answer this question we will consider ...

- Justification by Jesus' death and resurrection
 - The Justification of Believers will be Vindicated at the Final Judgment
 - The Justification of Believers will be Vindicated by Their Good Works

Justification by Jesus' Death and Resurrection

Jesus' death and resurrection "justified" or verified His claims about Himself and those who believe in Him. Jesus made claims about Himself, which His accusers claimed were lies, but His resurrection proved He was right. Jesus claimed to be equal with God (John 5:18). He is equal to God (John 14:10). When Jesus rose from the dead He "was vindicated by the Spirit" (1 Timothy 3:16). The Holy Spirit brought life to Jesus' body after He died. His resurrection proved, beyond reasonable doubt that the God who created life was at work in Him, because He was "the Author of life" (Acts 3:15).



Those who believe in Jesus are "**united with him**" in His **death** and **resurrection**" (Romans 6:5). The believer's "**old self was crucified with him**" Believers are no longer "**enslaved to sin**" (Romans 6:6). His resurrection showed that he "**will never die again**" (Romans 6:9). Believers share a new kind of indestructible life that comes from Jesus' resurrection. They must not let "**sin ... reign**" in their bodies (Romans 6:12). Their bodies must be converted into "**instruments of righteousness**" (Romans 6:13). Believers show their freedom from sin by their righteous actions. This process of overcoming sin is an ongoing struggle for all who believe in Jesus. However, a final victory is

guaranteed because Jesus has already defeated the devil.

The word "justification" is a legal term that describes what Jesus did when He forgave sinners. It has nothing to do with anything believers have done or will do. Even a believer's faith is a "gift" from God (Ephesians 2:8). Believers are pardoned from their sins because of Jesus' sacrifice for them, and only because of what Jesus did for them.

The Justification of Believers Will Be Vindicated at the Final Judgment

At the time of the final judgment all who believe in Jesus will receive a resurrection body. This will take place when the believer's body dies, or when Jesus returns. What is important to know is that believers will stand before the judgment seat in their resurrection body, not their old, sin-filled body.

Paul says that all people will be judged by Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:10). Some will be found genuine believers, and some who claimed to believe will be judged as non-believers.

While here on earth, all believers "**are at home in the body**" (2 Corinthians 5:6). However, this "**earthly home**" will one day be "**destroyed**". When that happens, believers will be given "**a building from God**" that is "**not made with hands**" (2 Corinthians 5:1). In other words, one day every believer in Jesus will be given a body, like the body Jesus had after His resurrection.

Believers will "**not be found naked**" (2 Corinthians 5:3). They will have physical bodies. They will not be disembodied spirits.

In this final resurrection, believers will not be "**unclothed**." Instead, they will be "**further clothed**" (2 Corinthians 5:4). The phrase "**fully clothed**" refers to being "**clothed**" with a new body free from their past sins.

Paul is pointing out that believers will face their judgement before Christ clothed in their new body. The sinful nature will be gone. Believers will be judged only according to their identity in Christ, not their old sinful nature. Believers can look forward to that day with confidence because Jesus' death and resurrection will make them righteous before God.



The Justification of Believers Will Be Vindicated by Their Good Works

Most Christians are familiar with James' statement that "faith without works is dead" (James 2:17, KJV). What isn't so clear is that James is most likely talking about the same judgment Paul mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. How are we to understand James' statement that Christians will be judged by their works?

James says that **Abraham** and **Rahab** were "**justified**" or judged as righteous by their faith that was put into action by their works or deeds. When James says , "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" (James 2:23), he is referring to the final judgment. James says that "**Rahab**" was "**justified by works**" (James 2:25). He says that Abraham, like all believers, was justified by works, and "**not by faith alone**" (James 2:24). This appears to contradict Paul's statement that believers are "not justified by works" but "through faith in Jesus Christ" (Galatians 2:16).

Further explanation is needed to understand this. I will use an illustration borrowed from Dr. Greg Beale. Once a year my family pays for a membership card to B.J.'s Wholesale Club. If I want to continue to buy groceries and other items at BJ's I need to pay that fee to get the card. Without the card I can't buy anything at B.J.'s. When I use the card, I don't have to pay for it again, until the next year. The card shows that I paid the money. The card is not the payment, but it shows that the payment was made.

A believer's good works are like the BJ's card. They verify that Christ's salvation has made the believer into a new person, who reflects His image. When believers do good works, they demonstrate that Jesus transformed them to be like Himself. Believers' works are not the price that was paid. Jesus' death on the cross was the price that was paid for believers' justification. A believer's good works don't pay the price for their sins, but they do show that they have been transformed by Christ. Only Christ can pay the price for their sins. But a believer's good works verify that a person has been transformed by Christ, and that is why they do good works.

James tells readers that when believers are judged, the good works they did after being made into Christ's likeness, will verify that Christ has made them new. Believers' good works will vindicate them when they stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10).

This does not mean that believers never sin. They do sin. But Jesus' death paid the price of their sin, and the power of His resurrection makes them into a person who reflects the righteousness of Jesus.

Conclusion

Many believers fall into a trap. They believe they are not "good enough" to belong to Jesus, because when they look back at their history as a believer, they see times when they have failed to obey Jesus. They think that their success as a believer will be measured by a balance of good works compared to bad works. They worry that there won't be enough good works to cancel out the bad works. This is not how Christ will judge people!

All people will come before Christ to be judged (2 Corinthians 5:10). The only measure Christ will use is whether you put your faith and trust in His death and resurrection. Do you measure your own worth according to what Jesus did for you? Do you show your gratitude to Jesus by showing His love to other people, including your enemies? Every believer needs to serve Jesus better. The big question is whether any of your actions have shown Jesus' righteousness and love.

A believer's good works give assurance that the believer has been transformed by the power of Jesus' resurrection in their life. But good works are not proof of being transformed by Jesus. When some people come before Christ to be judged, they will say, "I cast out demons in your name." But Christ will say, "I never knew you" (). Only God knows the true nature of a person's heart, and whether they truly believe in Christ.

On the other hand, believers cannot rest in satisfaction because they did good works at one time. They must continue to do good works in order to be assured of their connection to Christ's transformation. If you stop doing good works you no longer have assurance of your salvation. To have assurance of your salvation you must continue to do good works. So, even though only Jesus' death and resurrection can save you, your works are verification that you are being transformed by Jesus at work in you.

Can you point to times when you have shown that Jesus is at work in you, helping you to love the unlovable, and care for those who don't care about you? If you can, then you can know in your heart that Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, has been molding and shaping you into His likeness. If you can't find any evidence that Jesus is at work in you, then you need to ask Jesus to save you from your sin. He can save you if you believe in Him. Have you asked Jesus to save you?

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But **someone** will say, “You have **faith** and I have works.” **Show** me your **faith apart** from your works, and I will **show** you my **faith** by my works. You **believe** that God is one; you do **well**. Even the **demons believe**—and shudder! Do you **want** to be **shown**, you **foolish person**, that **faith apart** from works is **useless**? Was not **Abraham** our **father justified** by works **when** he **offered** up his son **Isaac** on the **altar**? You see that **faith** was **active** along with his works, and **faith** was **completed** by his works; and the **Scripture** was **fulfilled** that says, “**Abraham believed** God, and it was **counted** to him as **righteousness**”—and he was **called** a friend of God. You see that a **person** is **justified** by works and not by **faith** alone. And in the same way was not also **Rahab** the prostitute **justified** by works **when** she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body **apart** from the spirit is **dead**, so **also faith apart** from works is **dead**.

([ESV](#))

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Reconciled by Jesus

When I was about 10 years old my brother, sister, and I would go swimming with our friends and their mother. There was a place to swim at a lake nearby, and my friend's grandmother had a house on the shore of the lake.

My friends had grown up swimming there, but I was much slower learning to swim than they had been. I remember one time I wanted to prove that I could swim pretty well, so I dove down to the bottom. I had tried to do it lots of times before, but I had never made it to the bottom. This time I succeeded. But two or three times as I swam for the surface, I thought I was above water, and I opened my mouth but there was no air, just water.

I didn't panic. I kept my head. But, it seemed like hours, even though it was only a matter of seconds. Finally, I made it to the top and I could breathe again. It was so wonderful to be able to breathe air, once again, and feel fully alive. I didn't panic, but I did cough quite a bit, and I took a break on the shore for about ten minutes, and then I dove back into the water.

Spiritually, we are in over our heads. Sometimes we dive deep into things that separate us from God. Like the air we need to breathe, we need to get close to God, to really be alive. He is the source of life. He is the one who gave us the gift of life. He alone can provide the life we truly need. Not only can He provide life now, but He can provide life for all eternity.

We may feel like a young boy, thrashing up through the depths of the water, straining to get to the surface where we can breathe. We seem to be getting closer, but each time we try to breathe there is no air, just more water. God has provided a way for us to receive the life He has for us, but it isn't by our own efforts. It is as if Jesus lifts us out of the water's depths, and brings us to where we can receive the breath of life He provides for us.

There are many things in this world that separate us from God. God has a plan to provide the means of reconciliation so that we can be at peace with Him. That way is through Christ. Once we are established in the peace Christ mom, there are additional effects of that peace that will spread into other parts of our life. We will be much more at peace with other Christians. And, at the end of time, when Jesus returns, we will be at peace with all of creation in the new heaven and the new earth.

In this study we will consider how Jesus as Savior and Messiah has created ...

- Reconciliation with God,
- Reconciliation with Those in Christ, and
- Reconciliation with All Creation.

Reconciliation with God

All of humanity is separated from God. Everyone is guilty of sin (Romans 3:23). Whether we realize it or not, we are, by nature, all enemies of God (Romans 5:10). Like the air we breathe, we need God, but we can do nothing to bring ourselves closer to God. That is why we need a Savior.

The Hebrew language has no word for “reconciliation,” yet Paul uses the Greek word for “reconciliation” quite a lot. So, if the word doesn’t appear in the Old Testament, we might wonder why Paul sees reconciliation as one of the central teachings of Christ’s ministry. It’s because Isaiah tells about the restoration of the nation of Israel, after the Messiah comes. Paul saw Jesus’ ministry as the Messiah, as reconciling God to His people, and the result is the restoration that Isaiah predicted. Just think of Paul encountering Jesus on the Road to Damascus. Paul realizes that Jesus is the Messiah, and then in his mind he begins putting the pieces of the Old Testament teaching together.

Isaiah promised the
between God and His people in

Isaiah 43:18–19 (ESV)

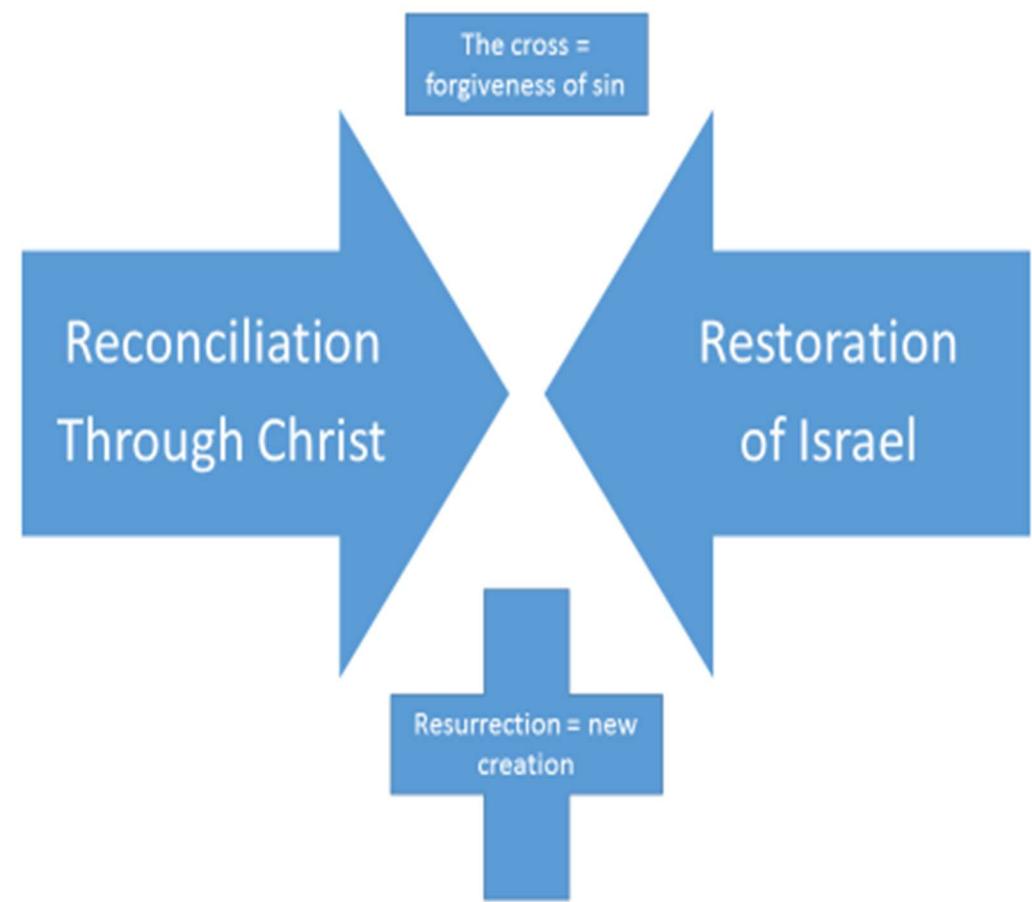
¹⁸“Remember not the former things,
nor consider the things of old.
¹⁹Behold, I am doing a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.

restoration of the relationship
Isaiah 43:18-19.

Paul must have grown up hearing about God’s promise concerning the future restoration of Israel, as did all Jewish children. Little children would ask their parents, “When is this ‘new thing’ going to happen?” Parents would tell them, “When the Messiah comes.” When Paul heard the Messiah call his name all the pieces came together, like pieces of a puzzle.

The promise of the new creation that Isaiah prophesied about would surpass the golden age of King Solomon. The desert land would flourish with rivers of water.

On the road to Damascus Christ revealed to Paul that these prophecies were connected to what He had done. Paul tells us, in 2 Corinthians 5:17, that Christ has inaugurated a new creation.



2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Everyone who is in Christ has become a part of this new creation.

Paul says a lot about reconciliation by Christ’s sacrifice (2 Corinthians 5:15 – “Christ died for all”). Through Christ’s death on the cross, an atonement for sin was provided so that “the old has passed away” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Through Jesus resurrection the power to create life provided a way for “the new” to come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). “For their sake” Jesus “was raised” from the dead (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Negatively, Jesus' death on the cross paid the price of sin, taking away the "old" debt of sin (see the minus sign in the diagram). Like a math problem, it was subtracted from the equation of what separated believers from God.

Positively, Jesus' resurrection began the new creation Isaiah had foretold (see the "plus" sign). He added eternal life to the equation. His power of the resurrection makes believers able to live in fellowship with God.

Isaiah had prophesied that a time would come when Israel would be restored and have a good relationship with God. Isaiah didn't say much about how God would cause that restoration to take place. Paul understood that the restoration Isaiah prophesied had come through Jesus' reconciliation.

Without Christ there would be no hope for reconciliation with God. Like my experience of diving too deep, we might try to come up for air, only to find we are still under water and not able to take a breath. Jesus died on the cross and rose again, and prepared the way for a new creation. He includes those who believe in Him as part of the new creation. The transformation of believers begins by giving them a new heart that can be molded and shaped, so that they begin to reflect the image of Jesus Christ in their actions and thoughts. But that's just the beginning of the reconciliation Jesus Christ has accomplished.

Reconciliation with Those in Christ

The church has been called one of the greatest scandals of the Christian faith because Christians have disagreed with each other so often and so greatly. In connection to reconciliation, Paul, and others in the New Testament, teach that Christians should be reconciled to each other. If you have ever been a part of a church fellowship for any length of time, you know that disagreements between brothers and sisters in Christ, are common. There is a difference between what the scripture promises and what most Christians experience.

Let's take a look at one passage where Paul builds on the idea of the restoration promised by Isaiah, and applies it to Christians. What should we expect of Christian fellowship? What does the Bible say?

Ephesians 2:11–22 (ESV)

¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Paul teaches that because Christ has made everyone who believes in Him into one people, that all who believe in Him are united by Him (Ephesians 2:14&15). Be careful how you interpret this. Paul is not saying that Christians will always get along with each other and never have disagreements. In fact, if you look at the book of Acts, you will see that Paul experienced lots of disagreements with other Christians. What Paul is saying is that the heart of the believer has become like the heart of Christ. We are like Jesus spiritually, deep inside. Our motivations have been transformed. However, Paul is not saying that this means that all Christians will get along perfectly.

Paul is giving a reason for Christians to set aside their differences. It is a description of how believers are being transformed so that they are becoming more and more like Jesus. But it is also a prescription. Believers need to recognize that they have a new identity in Jesus Christ. All Christians will have differences with one another. There are different races. Different social backgrounds. Different personal experiences. All of these things shape who they are. But what is most important is that they are in Jesus Christ. And He is making them so that they reflect His image. The reasons for unity among Christians outweigh the reasons for division.

Paul's teaching here is a prescription for what could be more than it is a description of what is. Christians need to ask themselves if they have done everything possible to find unity with other Christians, before acting on their disagreement with other Christians. Ask yourself, "Did Jesus die on the cross so that I could act hatefully toward my brother in Christ?" Do you think that Jesus should have been made to suffer a little more on the cross, and only then would you find His suffering sufficient to take away your anger at your fellow Christian? Take a moment to pray to Jesus and tell Him how you feel about your brother or sister in Christ, and why you are struggling to act in a loving way toward him or her. I believe that if you sincerely pour out your heart to Jesus in prayer, He will help you to weather the difficulty, and to find love in your heart for your brother or sister in Christ.

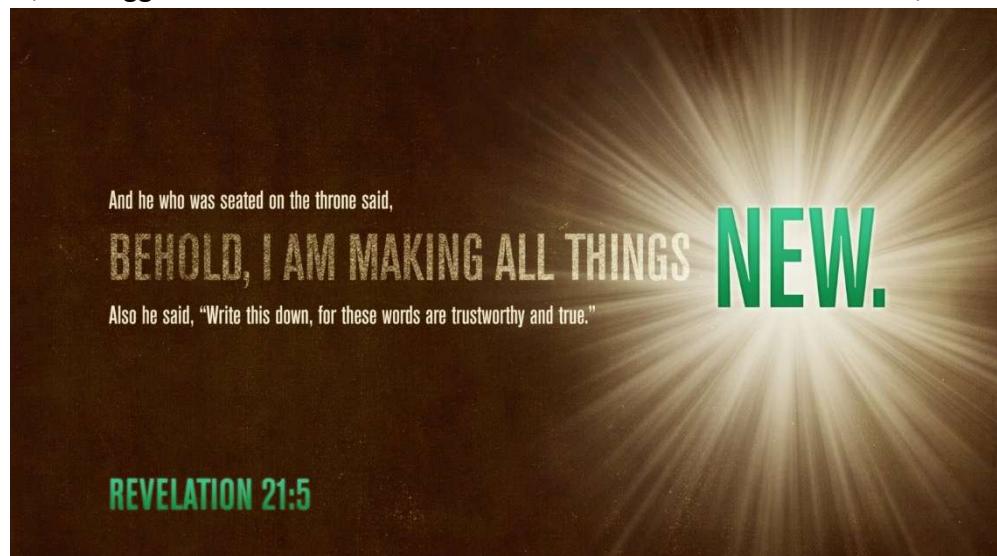
In extreme situations the only solution may be to spend time apart. You may have to love your brother or sister in Christ from a distance. Paul did that himself, separating from John-Mark over a disagreement (Acts 15:37-40), and later reunited with his brother in Christ (Colossians 4:10). It's not ideal, but it may be the best solution for the moment. We should always leave an open door so that reconciliation can come later.

The bottom line is that Jesus died on the cross so that there will be reconciliation between all those who are in Christ. So, if you can't work it out now, Jesus will make sure that you work it out in the new heaven and earth. It would be best if you can work out your disagreements now, but we have all of eternity before us. There will be time enough to work out every disagreement between those who are in Christ.

Reconciliation with All Creation

Christ reconciled all who are in Him with God the Father. He is in the process of reconciling all who believe in Him with one another. But, the biggest moment of reconciliation will come when Jesus returns, and everyone who is in Christ will be reconciled to everything in the new heaven and new earth.

Paul focused on what has already been accomplished by Christ: reconciliation between believers and God. But in the book of Revelation, the Apostle John, focused on what will only be accomplished when Jesus returns. Paul talks about believers seeing the face of Jesus in their hearts (2 Corinthians 4:6). But John talks about the time when believers will see the face of Jesus, eye to eye (Revelation 22:4; 1 John 3:2).



When Jesus returns a new heaven, and a new earth will become a full and final reality. The old creation will be gone. The return from exile Isaiah described will come.

Paul understood that believers are made new spiritually. They have a new heart and a new way of living. But John saw that Christians will suffer persecution and rejection until Jesus Christ returns. Only when Jesus returns will Christians be fully at peace, totally reconciled, totally restored in every way. And, everything in all creation, in the new heavens and new earth, will be totally reconciled to those who are in Christ.

Conclusion – Hold on to Jesus

As those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, hold on to your faith in Him. There will be joyous experiences when we see His hand at work in our lives. We should rejoice and give thanks.

Remember, Jesus Christ has paid the price of your sin, so you can be reconciled to God. Like a diver returning to the surface of the water, you can breathe deeply a breath of fresh air. God, Your Creator, will sustain you and provide for you because Christ has saved you.

Remember that even though you may struggle from time to time to get along with your brothers and sisters in Christ that it will not always be this way. When you can experience deep fellowship and unity with other Christians, rejoice and praise God for the glimpse of what is coming. The day will come when we will truly be one body in Christ, without any division.

Remember when you stub your toe, or bang your elbow against a concrete wall, that the day is coming when physical creation will never do harm to us at all. God will make all things new, and there will be no more tears.

An eternal, and glorious future awaits those in Christ. We have a taste of it already through the Holy Spirit, the Bible, and moments of great Christian fellowship. Hold on to Jesus. He's holding on to you.

Christ Brings Us Back to God (2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2)

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. We are not commanding ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. ([ESV](#))

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What the Holy Spirit Does

Suppose one night you had a dream that you were being rich and powerful. In this dream you owned huge and beautiful homes, fast and flashy cars, private jets, skyscrapers with your name written on them.

Then you woke up from your dream.

What's the difference between your life in the dream world and now? You might be tempted to say, "Everything." But, actually, there is one great gift you possessed in both worlds. It is a gift that holds everything together. Without it you won't be able to own anything at all, not even one single second of happiness. That gift is the gift of life. Even the richest man in the world loses every penny when his life ends.

Have you ever given much thought to the gift of life?

Since life is the most essential gift a human being can possess, we will take a look at what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit and what He does.

- The Holy Spirit Gives Life
- The Holy Spirit Gives Spiritual Gifts
- The Holy Spirit Prepares a Dwelling Place for God

The Holy Spirit Gives Life

The Holy Spirit gives the gift of life. In Romans 8:11, Paul says, "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." Paul is clearly saying that it was the Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. On the other hand, in John 5:21, Jesus says, "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will". Is this a contradiction? No, to say that the Father gives life, or that Jesus gives life, or that the Holy Spirit gives life is to say that God gives life. God is three persons but one God. Each of the three persons can be called givers of life. In our study today we will limit our focus to the activity of the Holy Spirit giving life. That does not mean that the Father or the Son don't also give life. One way of understanding the three persons of the Trinity is by understanding what each of the three persons does. In this lesson we will look only at what the Holy Spirit does for believers.

The Holy Spirit gave life to Jesus' on two important occasions. At His conception, the Holy Spirit produced the life of Jesus within Mary's womb (Matthew 1:18, 20), and when Jesus was resurrected from the dead, He was "vindicated by the Spirit" (1Timothy 3:16) when the Holy Spirit raised Jesus from the dead.

The Holy Spirit also gives life to believers (Romans 8:11). In John 20:22 the risen Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." This was Jesus' announcement to His disciples that He was giving them the Holy Spirit who would transform them by giving them the life of the coming age. Jesus' act of breathing on His disciples, reminds us

of a moment at the beginning of humanity's creation, when God breathed life into Adam (Genesis 2:7). As He had done before, Jesus was breathing a new kind of life, eternal life, into His disciples.

Ezekiel had a vision about a valley of dried bones, God said: "Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live" (Ezekiel 37:5). That breath is the Holy Spirit that comes from God. God has the power to bring life to dead, even dried up bones. This power of the Holy Spirit that Ezekiel saw in his vision, is the Holy Spirit giving life to those who were dead in their sins. Those who are in Christ have received this gift of life from God.

In Acts 2, after Jesus ascended to Heaven to sit on His throne (Revelation 5:1&7), He sent the Holy Spirit to believers gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit descended from Heaven onto the believers as fiery tongues. This visible sign demonstrated that the Heavenly power of the Holy Spirit was breaking into this world. This reminds of us of when God descended on Mount Sinai in the form of fire and revealed His law to Moses (Exodus 19:18). At Pentecost God revealed His presence again.

The Holy Spirit's power demonstrates that the new creation had begun. Paul calls the Holy Spirit a "down payment" or a "guarantee" (2Corinthians 5:4). The Holy Spirit is an actual taste of what believers can experience now before they receive all God has for them in the future.

The Holy Spirit Gives Spiritual Fruit

Isaiah prophesied that God would restore Israel, and the land would be very fruitful (Isaiah 32:15-17).

¹⁵ until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high,
and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field,
and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.

¹⁶ Then justice will dwell in the wilderness,
and righteousness abide in the fruitful field.

¹⁷ And the effect of righteousness will be peace,
and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. (Isaiah 32:15-17, ESV)

Paul interprets this "fruitfulness" as the fruits produced by the Holy Spirit in the life of believers (Galatians 5:22-23). Isaiah's prophecy of fruitfulness is fulfilled when believers bear spiritual fruit.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:22-23, ESV)

The "fruits of the Spirit" produce spiritual holiness in believers. Paul gives a list: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." This list gives us an idea of what kind of spiritual fruits the Holy Spirit produces in the lives of believers. These spiritual fruits are given to every believer.

Notice that each of the names for the "fruits of the spirit" can be used to describe ways that believers interact with each other. God's work in the heart of each believer becomes visible through their loving actions and words to others. Jesus said we shouldn't try to hide the light He gave us (Matthew 5:14-16). By using the "fruits of the spirit" to empower our actions toward each other, believers let His light shine brightly. Jesus means that we shouldn't let fear of rejection prevent us from doing what is right. Jesus always did the right thing. We should do the right thing as well, even when it may bring difficulty and pain into our lives. By the power of the Holy Spirit, believers are given the ability to follow His example and to do the right thing.

Life with Jesus isn't easier, but it is filled with overflowing love. It isn't always fun, but it always leads to more joy. If the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin, then you will need to confess your sins, but you will enjoy a deeper reality of peace with God when you do. Those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior receive the fruits of the Spirit so that they can share them, and by sharing them, more fruit will be given to them.

BUT THE FRUIT
OF THE SPIRIT IS

LOVE JOY PEACE
PATIENCE KINDNESS
GOODNESS FAITHFULNESS
GENTLENESS
SELF-CONTROL;
AGAINST SUCH THINGS
THERE IS NO LAW.
GALATIANS
5:22-23

The Holy Spirit Prepares a Dwelling Place for God

Ephesians 2:22 (ESV)

²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Believers are “built up” not only for their personal benefit, but also for the benefit of others. When the fellowship of believers is actively building each other up, according to God’s plan, then that fellowship of believers becomes a dwelling place of God. An individual person cannot do this alone. Each believer needs to be in fellowship with other believers so that this will take shape the way God intends.

We should not hoard the “fruit of the spirit,” and try to keep them all for ourselves. We need to share them. Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Jesus proved His love by sacrificing His life on the cross (1 John 3:16). Believers should be willing to lay down their lives for fellow believers (1 John 3:16, EVS). In fact, Jesus said: “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matthew 10:39, ESV).

The goal of fellowship abundant with the fruits of the spirit is not merely to make believers happier. The goal is that God will be glorified through believers being filled and sharing the fruits of the spirit. As Paul said in Ephesians 2:22, when believers bear the fruits of the spirit, and share them, they will become a suitable dwelling place for God. When God establishes His residency in the fellowship of believers, He will reign.

When I was in high school, I was part of a youth group in a small church that had a revival. Many teenagers who had never come to church before accepted Christ. Many of them brought their parents with them to church. Some of their parents and also became believers. Many lives and families were changed.

I believe there are periods of time when God breaks through the normal patterns of this world. He pours out His Spirit on people. During those times I believe we have the privilege of seeing God in action. He is always at work in our midst, but sometimes His work is more visible. Times of revival are times when His work is undeniable.

Even when we can’t see that God is at work He is still busy. We may not be able to see what He is doing but we know His ability to get things done is not limited to what we are able to understand. I remember some of my classmates in seminary. They wanted to skip their education in God’s word and get to work immediately. They felt that studying to prepare for ministry might be a waste of time. But even Jesus spent many years preparing for His ministry. Maybe there will be times when God wants you to prepare and not to just jump right in.

Whether you can see God at work or not, He is at work. If you can see what God is doing, then join in the work He is doing. If you can’t see that God is at work, then follow the teaching of the Bible and know that He is with you. But

in all circumstances do what you can to join in fellowship with other Christians and grow together with them as you seek to reflect the nature of God and grow closer to God, so that God may make His home with you.

Conclusion

Jesus' death on the cross paid for sin. Jesus' resurrection was the first time that a person experienced the kind of life that the Holy Spirit now gives to every believer. He has given us life.

As Christians we struggle to get along with each other. The Holy Spirit provides the gifts of the spirit that provide the ability to forgive one another, and bring out the best in fellow believers.

When believers grow in the Spirit, by using the fruits of the spirit, believers become a fellowship where the Spirit of God can really live out His identity. This is something God can do, through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus promised that God will provide everything we need. But more than meeting our needs, Jesus has provided a way for the Holy Spirit to become a living presence in our lives. Believers live in the presence of God! You can't get any closer to God than to have His Holy Spirit living within you.

In Christ,

Chap. Haslett

Galatians 5:22–23

But the **fruit** of the **Spirit** is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;** against such things there is no law.

([ESV](#))

Exported from [Logos Bible Software](#)

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When the Holy Spirit Moved In

Before I begin with this week's topic, I would like to share some thoughts about what happens whenever anyone talks about the Bible.

Whenever someone discusses the Bible, they are discussing words that give life. When someone mentions that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, the words of God, given by the Holy Spirit, are on the tip of the tongue of the one speaking. The words are coming from the mouth of the speaker to the ears of the listener, but the words themselves are God's words. Their power is from God Himself.

Even if the speaker isn't very good, the words have life-giving power. These words are God's words. They can lead a person to the Savior of the world. In the words of scripture eternal life can be found.

Here is this week's topic.

Have you thought about the definition of the word "temple"? What is a "temple"? Usually the word "temple" refers to a building. Usually it's made of stone, at least on the outside. What if we think of a temple according to what it does, how it functions? What does a temple do? It provides a place to meet God.

In the Old Testament a portable tabernacle was constructed according to God's own specifications (Exodus 26-27). The Jewish people used this tabernacle all the time that they wandered in the wilderness, and after they entered the Promised Land. During all the things that took place in the book of Judges, they used the tabernacle. Even during the reign of their first king, King Saul, they worshipped in the tabernacle. King David wanted to build a permanent temple for God, but God said David couldn't do it because he had killed too many people (1Chronicles 22:8).

In Revelation we read that in the new Jerusalem, which will descend from heaven to earth (Revelation 21:2), there will be no temple. Instead, God and the lamb, another name for Jesus, will be the temple (Revelation 21:22). God and Jesus will take the place of the temple because they won't need a building. They will be in the new Jerusalem. People can come to this new Jerusalem to meet God and Jesus. No temple will be needed.

When Jesus was on earth, two thousand years ago, He started helping people to understand that a temple didn't have to be a building. He said that He was a temple (John 2:19-21). At the time that Jesus said this, the disciples didn't understand. The Apostle Paul taught that believers are also a temple, or at least they are part of a temple.

This week we will look at how Jesus said believers are a temple. We will study what the Bible has to tell us about:

- When God moved into the tabernacle
- When God moved into the temple
- Jesus tells about a new kind of temple
- When God moved into the expansion of the new kind of temple
- What's the biggest difference between the old and the new temples?
- What part do you have in this new kind of temple?

When God Moved into the Tabernacle

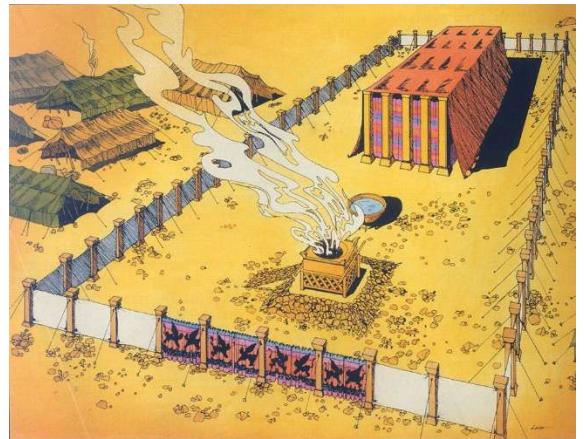
When the Jewish people left Egypt, and escaped being slaves, God met with Moses on Mount Sinai. While he was on the mountain, God gave him instructions so that there would be a special place where God could continue to meet with His chosen people after they left the area around Mount Sinai. Take a look at Exodus 40:34-35 to see what happened when God moved into the tabernacle that God instructed Moses to build.

God Moved into the Tabernacle

³⁴ Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁵ And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. (Exodus 40:34-35, ESV)

God made His presence known. First, God descended from heaven onto Mount Sinai, where Moses met with God, and the sound of trumpets was heard (Exodus 19:13, 16, & 19). A trumpet makes a sound when wind is blown through it. We think of a trumpet as producing the sound, but actually it's the air being blown through a trumpet that creates the sound. The trumpet's sound then, is the sound of wind being blown through a trumpet. Second, fire descended from heaven onto Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:19). Third, when the tabernacle was dedicated, God's glory filled the tabernacle (Exodus 43:34).

Notice this pattern. A similar pattern occurred one other time. That time was when the temple that King Solomon built for God was dedicated.



When God Moved into the Temple Built by Solomon

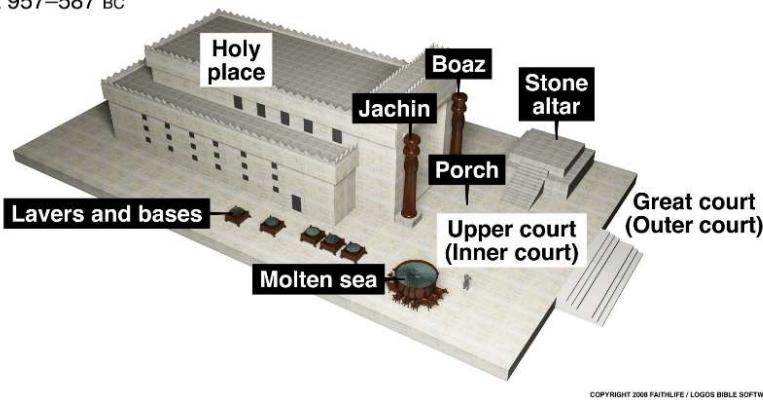
As I said earlier, David had wanted to build a permanent building where God could be worshipped, but God turned him down. The honor of building the Temple went to David's son, King Solomon. We find the account of the time when the presence of God moved into the Temple built by King Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7:1-2.

God Moved into the Temple

¹As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. ² And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house. (2 Chronicles 7:1-2, ESV)

Solomon's Temple

Circa 957–587 BC



The pattern is now familiar. God made His presence known. First, when fire came down from heaven and consumed the offering placed on the altar (2 Chronicles 7:1) it would have made a loud sound. When fire came down from heaven and burned up the offering on the altar it would have certainly made a lot of noise. There would have been wind also. Second, fire itself came down from heaven (2 Chronicles 7:1). Third, "the glory of the Lord filled the Temple" (2 Chronicles 7:1).

Moving into Any Other Temple

In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah we can read about a temple that was built when the Jewish people returned from exile. However, there is no mention of the presence of God moving into the temple. When Herod built the temple in Jerusalem that existed in Jesus' day, there was no mention of the presence of God moving into it. Yet, Jesus did refer

But No Mention of God

to it as “my Father’s house” (Luke 2:49; John 2:16). But it does leave us wondering if God ever moved into any other Temple than the one built by King Solomon, as God had also moved into the tabernacle.

A Different Kind of Temple

One day Jesus was talking to His disciples. They were visiting the Temple in Jerusalem. The disciples were impressed with the beauty and grandeur of the temple that King Herod had built.

Jesus said He was a temple

John 2:19–22 (ESV)

¹⁹Jesus answered them, “**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**” ²⁰The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” ²¹But he was speaking about the temple of his body. ²²When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Can you imagine what it was like to hear Jesus say, “Destroy this temple in and three days I will raise it up” (John 2:20). The disciples had no idea what Jesus meant. We’re told that they didn’t understand the meaning of Jesus’ words until after He died on the cross and rose again. Shortly before He spoke these words Jesus had driven merchants and money changers out of the Temple.



It’s different for us, when we read these words. Jesus’ physical, human body was the living, breathing temple of God, even though it was not a building made of stone, the building near to where He stood when He spoke these words.

Years later, the Apostle Paul said that believers are “the temple of the living God” (2 Corinthians 6:16). Paul develops this idea in Ephesians 2:21, where we read that we are being built into a dwelling for God.

The Apostle Peter stated that believers are “living stones” that are being built into a house for God or a temple. He goes on to say that Jesus was the cornerstone of this temple. Jesus was “the stone that the builders rejected” (1 Peter 2:5-7). Jesus was

the cornerstone, or the foundation of the temple. This fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 28:16, “therefore thus says the Lord God, “Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste.’”

Jesus was the foundation of this new type of temple of the living God. Believers are living stones that are being fitted together to become a dwelling of God.

When did God take up residence in this temple?

When God Moved into the Expansion of the New Kind of Temple

Just after Jesus ascended to heaven (Acts 1:6-11) the disciples were gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost, one of the annual feasts of the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit came, as Jesus had promised (Acts 1:1-15).

The Holy Spirit Filled the New Temple

¹ When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.

² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4. ESV)

God made His presence known. First, came the sound of a “mighty rushing wind” (Acts 2:2). Second, “tongues” of “fire” rested on the head of each believer (Acts 2:3). Third, the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4).

We saw this pattern when God moved into the tabernacle and the temple built by King Solomon. It helps to explain the meaning of what happened on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came.

Just as Jesus had been a temple of God, because God lived in a human body, those who are in Christ become a part of the same temple. When a person believes in Jesus Christ as his or her savior, he or she becomes part of this temple. The events on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 show that the Holy Spirit was moving into the people who were becoming part of this temple. They were becoming part of the body of Jesus (2Corinthians 12:27). They were becoming part of the temple of God (1Corinthians 3:16). By the way, when Paul writes “you are the body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:16), the “you” is plural. Paul is saying that Christians, as a group, are the body of Christ. All Christians put together are one temple and are part of the temple where Jesus is the chief cornerstone (1Peter 2:7). There aren’t lots of different temples, there is one temple.

What’s the Biggest Difference Between Old and the New Temples?

Did you notice that when the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle and the temple that no one could enter? When the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, Moses was unable to enter (Exodus 40:35). When the glory of the Lord filled the temple, the priests were unable to enter (2 Chronicles 7:2).

But when the Holy Spirit descended from heaven and came to rest as tongues of fire over the believers’ heads, He entered into them and filled them with His presence (Acts 2:4). Instead of preventing people from entering the temple, the Holy Spirit entered people and they became the temple.

How could things be so very different? Because in Christ, believers have been transformed into a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17) who have been “born again” (John 3:16). They are different than they were before believing in Jesus. To a large extent this transformation is invisible to human beings, but God is aware of the difference. Before this transformation a human being could not survive even seeing God’s face. After being “born again” God can indwell a believer, and dwell within him or her, by the Holy Spirit. This transformation will be visible to other human beings when the love of Jesus (John 13:35 & 1 John 4:7) and His righteousness (John 14:15 & 1 John 2:29) becomes visible in the actions and words of a believer.

Are You a Living Stone in God’s Temple?

The temple of the living God is where people can encounter the presence of God. That’s a tall order for believers. But, it really isn’t up to the believer to make it happen. God is the one who makes it happen.

Is it happening? If there are no indications of Jesus love or righteousness in your words or actions, then you really need to come to Jesus and ask Him to make you into a new person who is forgiven and transformed to be like Jesus. And, if you are seeing God’s transforming power at work then take a moment to praise God and give Him thanks that now you are a living stone in God’s living, breathing temple.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple (John 2:13–22)

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

The **Passover** of the **Jews** was at **hand**, and **Jesus** went up to **Jerusalem**. In the **temple** he **found** those who were **selling oxen** and **sheep** and **pigeons**, and the money-changers **sitting there**. And **making** a whip of **cords**, he **drove** them all out of the **temple**, with the **sheep** and **oxen**. And he **oured** out the **coins** of the money-changers and **overturned** their **tables**. And he **told** those who **sold** the **pigeons**, “**Take** these **things away**; do not make my Father’s **house** a **house** of trade.” His **disciples remembered** that it was written, “**Zeal** for your **house** will consume me.” So the **Jews said** to him, “What sign do you show us for doing these **things**?” **Jesus** answered them, “Destroy this **temple**, and in **three days** I will raise it up.” The **Jews** then **said**, “It has taken forty-six years to build this **temple**, and will you **raise** it up in **three days**?” But he was speaking about the **temple** of his body. When therefore he was **aised** from the dead, his **disciples remembered** that he had **said** this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that **Jesus** had spoken.

([ESV](#))



John 14:1–7 (ESV)

14 “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.” ⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

God Will Make His Home with Believers

You’ve heard the expression: “There’s no place like home.” At home we are most ourselves. And, if we like our home we can relax there.

Jesus told us that for an eternity of time in the past, before the creation of our world, He and the Heavenly Father, enjoyed a relationship of love for each other (John 17:24). Apparently, the desire of God the Father and God the Son was to spread the boundaries of their love when they created human beings. Jesus prayed, in John 17:4 that those who believed in Him might “be with me where I am.” Jesus also told His disciples that when He left them, He would prepare a place for them in His Father’s house (John 14:1). Jesus made it very clear that He wanted to make His home a home for believers, so that they might be with Him forever.

Even in the Old Testament we see that God the Father wanted to be with His people. In Exodus 29:45, God says, “I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God.” God uses the tabernacle to accomplish this: “And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.” The sanctuary God mentions here is the tabernacle.

In both the Old and the New Testament, we see that God desired to dwell with His people.

This week we will study:

- 1) God’s fellowship with Adam and Eve in Eden.
- 2) How the New Jerusalem from Heaven will function as a global Holy of Holies.
- 3) God’s desire for fellowship with His people.

1. God Fellowshipped with Adam and Eve in Eden

It may seem strange to refer to Eden as a temple. As far as we know there were no buildings in Eden. But I will list reasons that we might consider that Eden functioned as a kind of temple made by God as a place to have fellowship with the people He created. I admit this is a different way of looking at things than what is familiar to most people who have read the Bible. But try to keep your mind open to these ideas because I think you will find them helpful in understanding God’s desire to dwell with the people He created.



First, God met with Adam and Eve in Eden. It was a place where God had fellowship with the people He had created, and in that way, it fulfilled the function of a temple. We can see this because, apparently, Adam and Eve were familiar with meeting God in the garden. After they sinned, Adam and Eve “heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden … and … hid themselves” (Genesis 3:9). I think that Adam understood that God was coming to judge Adam and Eve for their disobedience. Adam knew they had disobeyed God and wanted to avoid God’s judgment. So, they hid. God asked them why they hid from him. They said it was because after they ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they realized that they were naked (Genesis 3:10). But notice that Adam says, “I heard the sound of you in the garden.” Adam correctly recognized the sound of God walking in the garden. This indicates that Adam was familiar with meeting God in the garden, and knew what

God sounded like when He walked in the garden. Eden was a place where Adam and Eve had fellowship with God.

Second, Adam was told to “cultivate” and “keep” the garden (Genesis 2:15 – “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it”). In other places in the Old Testament the same two words are used to describe the duties of the priests in the temple and tabernacle. The priests were required to anything unclean from entering the tabernacle or the temple (Numbers 3:5-8). If Adam had done what God had commanded him to do (using these two words) he would have stopped the serpent from entering the Garden of Eden, or at least driven it out of the Garden when he saw it was there. Adam was supposed to do the same things priests did when they worked in the tabernacle or temple if we translate these words the same way they are translated at other times.

Third, the entrance to Eden faced east and the entrance to the Temple in Jerusalem faced east. When Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden, we read that they exited “at the east of the garden” (Genesis 3:24). In his prophecies about the temple, Ezekiel says it will have a “gateway facing east” (Ezekiel 40:6).

Fourth, a river flowed out of Eden (Genesis 2:10), and a river will flow out of the temple Ezekiel prophesied about (Ezekiel 47:1).

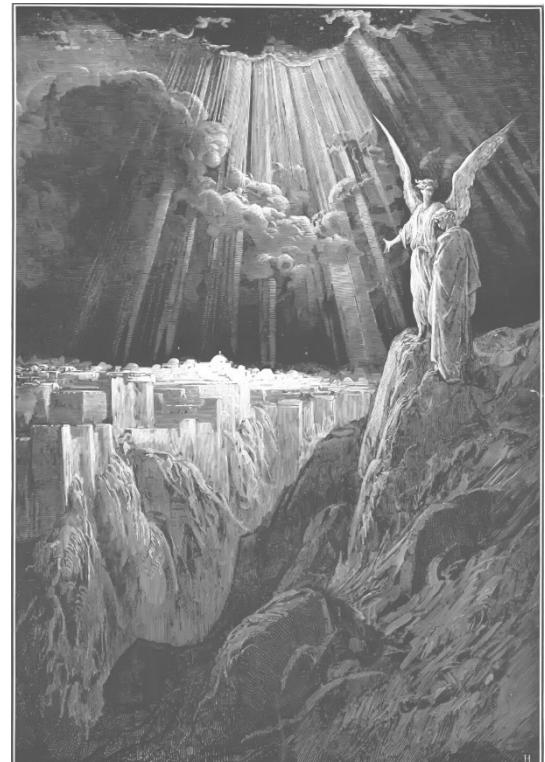
Fifth, the prophet, Ezekiel, called Eden the “garden of God” (Ezekiel 28:13) and “the holy mountain of God” (Ezekiel 28:14&16). The Temple in Jerusalem was built on Mount Zion, also called “the mountain of God” (Psalm 68:15).

As I said earlier, it may take some getting used to, in order to think of Eden as a temple. Focus on the function of a temple to be a place where God’s people come to meet God and be in the presence of God. Also notice that God’s determination to dwell with His people did not change, even after they sinned against Him.

2. The New Jerusalem Will Function as a Global Holy of Holies

We read that in the New Jerusalem there will be no temple. Instead the lamb and God will be the temple. The “lamb” is another name for Jesus. The New Jerusalem will descend from heaven to Earth (Revelation 21:22). In other words, there will be no need for a building where people will come to see God because God’s presence will fill the entire city.

The city of New Jerusalem, though, is in the shape of a perfect cube (Revelation 21:16). The Holy of Holies in both the tabernacle and the temple were also the shape of a cube (the tabernacle - Exodus 26:16 & 31-33; the temple - 2Chronicles 3:8). The city of Jerusalem then could be understood as serving the function of being the Holy of Holies, where God and the lamb will dwell. In Revelation 21:3 we



read, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God” (ESV). The Holy of Holies is the place where God’s presence would dwell in the tabernacle and the temple. In this sense the city of New Jerusalem functions as the Holy of Holies in the New Heaven and Earth. To be honest, I’m not sure if the measurements of the New Jerusalem are literal or only symbolic, but I am sure that they indicate that the New Jerusalem is the Holy of Holies where God dwells.

Like the Holy of Holies nothing unclean or evil will enter the New City of Jerusalem (Revelation 21:27 - “nothing unclean will ever enter”). So, where will those who are evil or unclean be? If they aren’t allowed into the City then are outside the city. But exactly where are they outside the city? At the beginning of the chapter, John told us that there is a New Heaven and Earth. So, the unclean are located somewhere outside the city limits. But where is the boundary of the city limits? We know that wherever that boundary is, the “evildoer will still do evil” (Revelation 22:11). Where can an evildoer in this New Heaven and Earth do evil? The evildoers will be put in “the lake that burns with fire and sulfur” (Revelation 21:8). They won’t be on planet earth. From this we conclude that the New Jerusalem is world-wide in terms of its area of control. The city limit is the New Earth. This would also fit with the idea that Jesus will rule over the whole world (Revelation 11:15 - “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”)

During the time of the tabernacle, God’s presence was in the Holy of Holies. During the time of the Temple built by Solomon God’s presence was in the Holy of Holies. The presence of God is in Jesus, and those who are in Jesus are also filled with God’s presence. But in the New Earth, God’s presence will be over the whole earth. Wherever a believer goes, God will be with each believer, in His full presence.

3. What we learn about God’s desire for fellowship with His people

There are times when we feel lonely, but Jesus tells us that He is always with us. He said, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20, ESV). In the new creation, after Jesus returns, His presence will fill the earth. Now His presence fills our hearts.

There are many places in the New Testament where we can find this image of Jesus Christ abiding in the hearts of believers. Paul writes, “For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). Moses couldn’t look at the face of God, or he would have died (Exodus 33:18-20). Yet, every believer has been made new by Christ, and now not only can a believer look into the face of Christ, but in every believer’s heart the face of Christ is found.

A great sense of joy is expressed when we read that in the New Heavens and Earth God will dwell with His people (Revelation 21:3). This is how God feels about it. How do you feel about it?

Do you think of God dwelling in your heart as one of the most exciting and exhilarating things in life, or are you bored by it? If you don’t find yourself very excited about the thought of spending eternity with God, then some things in your thinking need adjustment. He is the creator of life. He is the source of every good thing. He is the source of all true joy. It is only because of human sin that the experience of His love and joy are hindered in our lives.

What about the fact that when sin entered the world God didn’t give up on the idea of dwelling among His people? Repeatedly human beings let God down and betrayed Him. But God never gave up on His plan to dwell among His people.

What we read about in the Garden of Eden sounds perfect. But Eden was just a starting point. The New Heavens and Earth will be better than Eden was. Think of the difference between a seed and the plant it grows into. Eden was the seed. The New Heaven and New Earth are the fully grown plant.

In this world there is always a possibility that a believer will stumble and fall into sin. In fact, if we’re honest, every believer does this again and again. But the coming kingdom will be a place where believers will not be capable of sin. There will be no temptation. There will be no sinful desire coming from a human body born in sin. Thus, there will be no sin there, because we will have a new body, similar to the body Jesus had after He rose from the tomb. Everything that currently interrupts our experience of God’s wonderful grace and love will pass away. Only the wonderful blessings of God will remain. And, God’s full presence will always be with us. We will never know loneliness.

Are you ready? Christ can make you ready if you believe and put your trust in Him. A wonderful, eternal home is waiting for those who believe in Jesus. In that home they will become the person God has always intended them to be, without sin, pure and holy. In the meantime, believers are to let the “peace of Christ rule in their hearts” (Colossians 3:15, ESV).

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

“Let not your **hearts** be troubled. **Believe** in God; **believe also** in me. In my **Father’s house** are **many rooms**. If it were not so, would I have **told** you that I go to **prepare a place** for you? And if I go and **prepare a place** for you, I will **come again** and will **take** you to myself, that where I am you may be **also**. And you **know** the way to where I am going.” **Thomas said** to him, “**Lord**, we do not **know** where you are going. How can we **know** the way?” **Jesus said** to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the **life**. No one **comes** to the **Father** except through me. If you had **known** me, you would have **known** my **Father also**. From now on you do **know** him and have **seen** him.”

([ESV](#))

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Two Great Commissions

Two commissions were given by God to human beings. The first Commission was given to Adam by God when Adam was created. The second Commission was given by Jesus to his disciples.

These two commissions are different in some ways. The first Commission took place when there was no sin on earth. The second Commission took place when Jesus paid the price for sin and made a way for salvation from sin to all who would believe. The first Commission was given at a time when there were no nations on the earth. The second Commission was given so that Jesus' disciples might spread the Good News to all the nations of the earth.

The two commissions are alike in many ways. Both talk about going into all the world. They both give directions about what should take place in the future.

The Commission given by Jesus is possible because Jesus fulfilled the first Commission by being the last Adam and turning the direction of humanity around, so that human beings could have hope of an eternal future with God. This was only possible because Jesus paid the price of our sins when he died on the cross. Only because of this was it possible to move God's plan for humanity onto what God had always intended, that human beings could spend eternity with Him. God's intention had always been that all the earth might belong to people who believed in Him and served Him.

Let's look at the Commission Jesus gave to His disciples and the commission given to Adam:

Genesis 1:28-30 – God gave to Adam	Matthew 28:19-20 – Jesus gave to disciples
²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ²⁹ And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so.	¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

God commissioned His people to go out into the world. In this lesson we will consider:

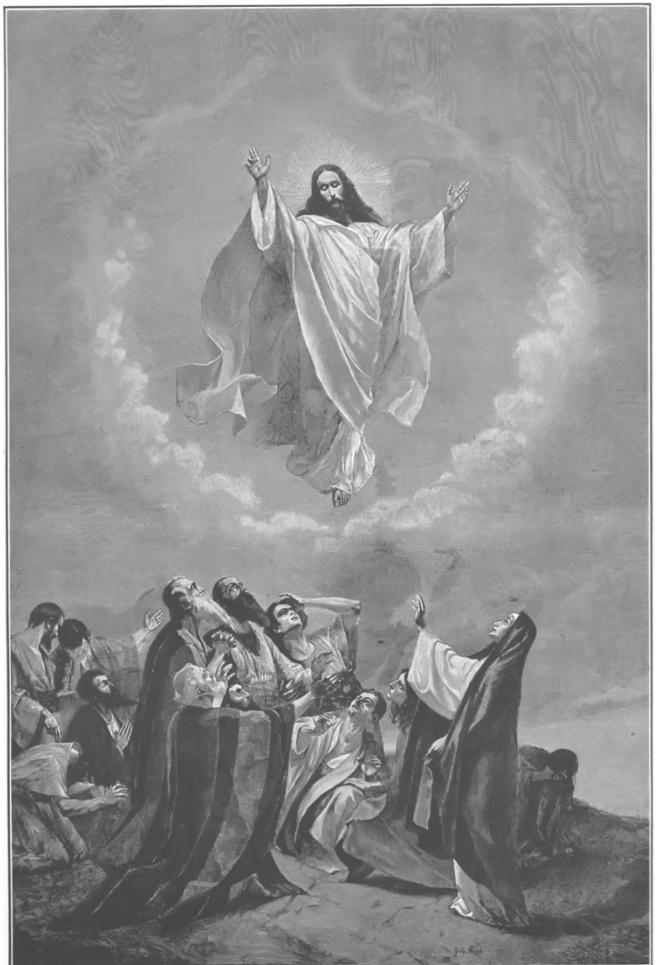
- How did Jesus fulfill the commission given to Adam?
- How can we fulfill the commission given to Jesus' disciples?

How did Jesus fulfill the commission given to Adam?

God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden to guard and protect it (Genesis 2:15). Instead, when an unclean animal, a serpent, entered the Garden, Adam did not drive it out or kill it, as he should have done. Not only did he not drive it out, he talked to it. And, not only did he talk to the serpent but he followed the words of the serpent instead of the words of God.

At the beginning of His ministry Jesus was tempted by Satan (Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:9-13; Luke 4:1-13). Not only did Jesus resist the temptations of Satan, but Satan left Him alone and departed from Jesus (Luke 4:13). Almost immediately Jesus began to drive evil spirits out of people who were possessed by them. Adam should have driven the serpent from the Garden. Jesus did drive evil spirits out of the land of Israel.

There are many other ways that Jesus fulfilled the commission given to Adam. The greatest example of Jesus' fulfillment of Adam's Commission was when Jesus died on the cross He paid the price of sin (Colossians 2:14). Jesus demonstrated His victory over the power of sin and death when He rose from the grave. Jesus succeeded where Adam had failed.



How can we fulfill the commission Jesus gave to His disciples?

By fulfilling the commission given to Adam Jesus was able to fulfill God's plan by allowing those who bear the image of God (Genesis 1:26) to bring God's image throughout the world. When Adam sinned, he could not bring the image of God to the whole earth, because he no longer portrayed the image of God. Jesus was the image of God in a way that Adam was not (Hebrews 1:3). This was largely because Adam was a copy, but Jesus was the original. Jesus was God in human flesh. He was the perfect image of God because He was God. When a person believes in Jesus, he bears the true image of God and he is able to do many things Jesus did, including believing in God.

Receiving – Believers must receive the Gospel when it is shared with them. No one can believe in Jesus as Savior until they receive the message of the Gospel which is usually when hear someone tell them about what Jesus has done for them. In the "Great Commission" Jesus told His disciples to tell other people everything that He had taught them (Matthew 28:20). So, the first step is to respond the Gospel, or to receive the Gospel message.

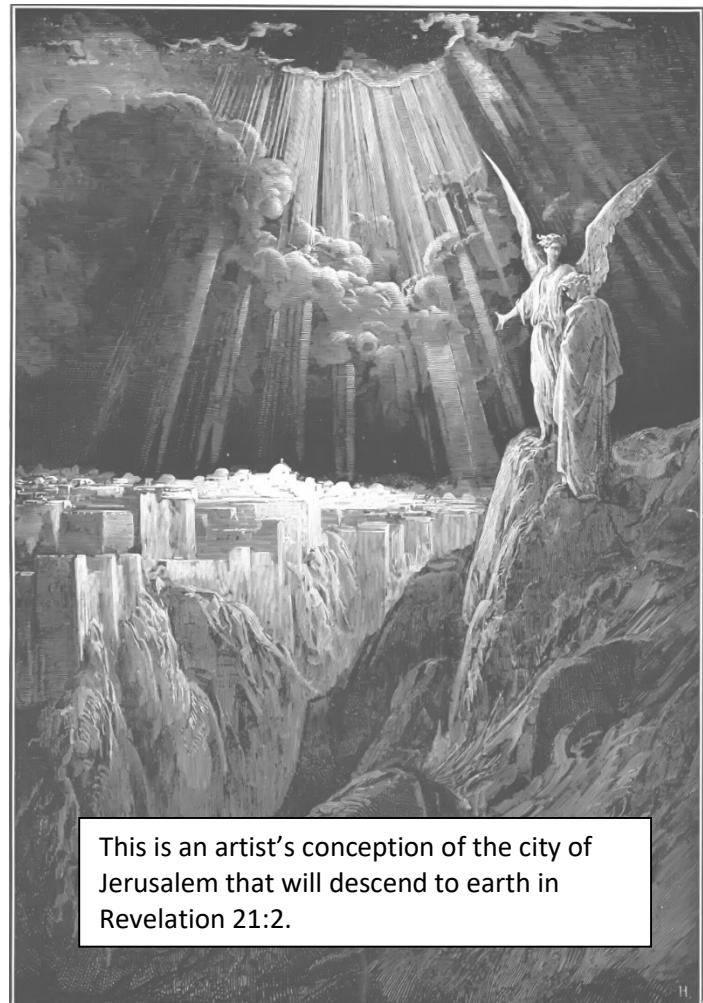
Believing – Those who believe in Jesus are saved by faith. It is not something that the believer does. The believer cannot earn His salvation. It comes only by what Jesus has done for the believer, when He died on the cross and rose from the dead. When a believer trusts Jesus to save them from their sin, then everything that Jesus has done for them will make them new.

Living – Believers bear spiritual fruit. People know believers by their love for each other (John 13:35). When God the Father looks at a believer He will see only the righteousness of Jesus in that person, because Jesus Christ has made that person into His own image (Romans 8:29). Love for other believers and righteousness are the kinds of fruit believers bear.

So, how do we know if others see the love of Christ in us, or if God sees the righteousness of Christ in us? True believers bear spiritual fruit (John 15:8 & 16). What if you're not sure whether you are bearing spiritual fruit? If you are struggling with this, pray and ask Jesus to help you. He promised that He is with those who believe in Him. He wants you to bear fruit. If you truly want to bear fruit for Jesus don't give up. It may take time and persistence, but Jesus will cause you to bear spiritual fruit.

Giving – After beginning with a foundation of love for others, we will see that sharing the Gospel with others is a natural expression of our love for them. We will want to share the joy of fellowship with Jesus with others because we care about them and want them to share this joy with us. Jesus commanded that His disciples share the Gospel with others (Matthew 28:19-20). But this is not a tedious chore. It is something that should flow naturally from living according to the Gospel. We share the love we have received from Jesus when we share the Gospel with others.

God gave a commission to Adam, which Jesus fulfilled. Jesus gave a commission to his disciples which He can give you the ability to fulfill.



This is an artist's conception of the city of Jerusalem that will descend to earth in Revelation 21:2.

The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20)

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

And Jesus **came** and **said** to them, “All **authority** in **heaven** and on **earth** has **been given** to me. Go therefore and **make disciples** of all **nations**, **baptizing** them in the **name** of the **Father** and of the Son and of the **Holy Spirit**, **teaching** them to **observe** all that I have **commanded** you. And **behold**, I am with you **always**, to the end of the age.” ([ESV](#)) -- Exported from [Logos Bible Software](#).

multiply
 green
 food
 sea
 blessed
 plant
 earth
 said
 life
 living
 moves
 yielding
 creeps
 fish
 beast
 said
 given
 fill
 face
 all
 God
 tree
 dominion
 breath
 fruit
 seed
 thing
 everything
 Behold
 every
 Subdue
 heavens

The Commissions None Could Fulfill

Patiently God waited. Persistently God worked toward the moment when the time would be right. Bit by bit God revealed His plan, but He did not reveal more information than His people could understand.

God first issued a commission to Adam, revealing His plan. Adam would be an active participant. but instead of working with God, Adam worked against God.

The words and message given to Adam were given later to Noah. Then, in a different form, they were given to Abraham and his descendants.

Repeatedly, God showed His people that they couldn't fulfill their mission through their own effort. They had to complete the first steps of their mission before they could move to the final stages, where they would rule over the world.

Only one solution existed. A Messiah, a Savior was needed.

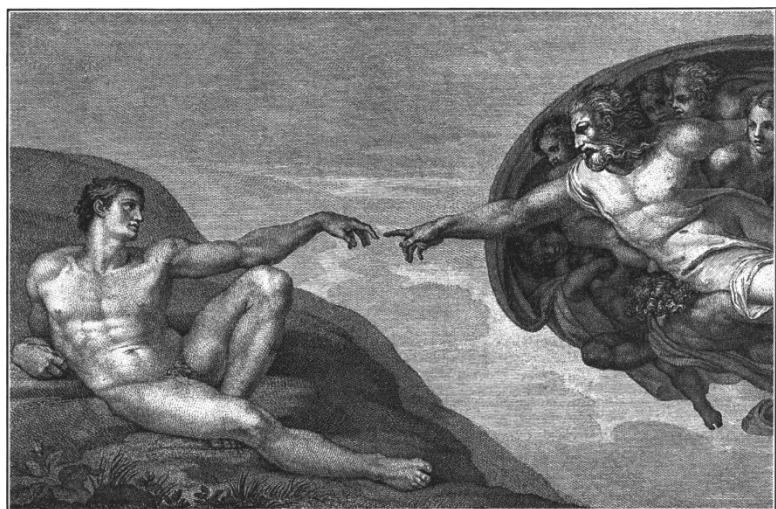
Our study this week will be a "high speed" review of world history, focusing on God's commissions to His people in the Old Testament. We will compare all commissions to the one given to Adam.

The First Commission

In the first chapter of Genesis, we find the first, and most ancient command that God gave to a human being.

Genesis 1:28-30 (ESV)

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ²⁹ And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food."



God told Adam to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth,” to “subdue it, and “have dominion” over the living creatures. To “have dominion” means that God wanted Adam to rule as a king over the earth and every creature on the earth. Remember, this command was given to Adam before he sinned. God wanted Adam and his descendants to rule the earth, but then Adam sinned when he listened to the serpent, instead of God. As a result, Adam forfeited the role God had given him.

God Gives the Commission Again

Let's take a close look at two repetitions of this commission as it was given to Noah and to Abraham. First, we will look at the commission given to Noah:

Genesis 1:28-30 - ADAM	Genesis 9:1-5 - NOAH
<p>²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be <u>fruitful</u> and <u>multiply</u> and <u>fill the earth</u> and subdue it, and have dominion over the <u>fish</u> of the sea and over the <u>birds</u> of the heavens and over <u>every</u> living thing that moves on the earth.” ²⁹ And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.”</p>	<p>9 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be <u>fruitful</u> and <u>multiply</u> and <u>fill the earth</u>. ² The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon <u>every</u> beast of the earth and upon <u>every</u> bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground, and all the <u>fish</u> of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. ³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. ⁴ But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. ⁵ And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.</p>

I underlined the parts that are repeated and I put in bold the parts that are different. Both Noah and Adam were told to be “fruitful and multiply”, “fill the earth”, and rule over “bird(s)”, “fish” and “every” creature on the earth. There is one clear difference between God’s commission to Adam and God’s commission to Noah. Adam is told to eat “**every green plant**”. Noah is told to eat “**every moving thing**” but not to eat “**its blood**.” In other words, the blood should drained from the meat before it is eaten.

Just as Adam sinned, Noah also sinned and the goal of the commission was not reached once again. But God did not give up on the human race. Each time God issues a commission to a new person He changes parts of the commission. Next God issued a commission to Abraham. God told Abraham to “**walk before me and be blameless**” (Genesis 17:1). After Abraham all other commissions are a continuation of the commission given to Abraham. They build on God’s commission to Abraham, and fulfill God’s promises given to Abraham.

God Gives the Commission to Abraham with Changes

Let's compare the commissions given to Adam and Abraham:

Genesis 1:28-30 - ADAM	Genesis 12:2-3 - ABRAHAM
<p>²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be <u>fruitful</u> and <u>multiply</u> and <u>fill the earth</u> and subdue it, and have dominion over the <u>fish</u> of the sea and over the <u>birds</u> of the heavens and over <u>every</u> living thing that moves on the earth.” ²⁹ And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.”</p>	<p>² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.</p> <p>Genesis 17:1&2</p> <p>When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, ² that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.”</p> <p>... ⁶ I will make you exceedingly <u>fruitful</u>, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you.</p> <p>... ⁸ And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”</p> <p>... ¹⁵ And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶ I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”</p>

I underlined only the word “fruitful” because it is the only word repeated in both commissions. God made adjustments in His commission to Abraham. Instead of saying that Abraham’s descendants would rule the earth, God said they would be “**nations**” and “**kings of peoples**”. God would give them the land where Abraham lived as “**an everlasting possession.**” God would “**make**” Abraham’s “**name great**”. Through Abraham’s descendants “**the families of the earth**” would “**be blessed.**”

God narrowed the scope of who would be considered His people. Beginning with God’s commission to Abraham, God’s people would be limited to Abraham’s descendants. God said that all nations would be blessed through Abraham’s descendants, but only God’s people would be given the promises of God.

God’s plan for eternity never changed in His commission to Abraham. God told Abraham that the land would be an “everlasting possession.” When this commission was repeated to Isaac, God added one more change. God promised that He would be with Isaac (Genesis 26:24). Take note of this change! This is the first time God makes that promise. The same promise is repeated to Jacob (Genesis 28:15), Moses, Joshua, and Jeremiah. God’s promised presence with His chosen people was the big “game changer.” God was now present with His people, so things were very different, but God still had many more lessons to teach His people.

God Gives the Commission to the Nation of Israel

The commission given to Adam was also given to the nation of Israel with some changes. What started as a commission to one individual became a commission to an entire nation. There are several places where parts of the commission to Adam was later given to Israel.

Genesis 47:27	Deuteronomy 7:13
Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And they gained possessions in it, and were <u>fruitful</u> and <u>multiplied</u> greatly.	He will love you, bless you, and <u>multiply</u> you. He will also bless the <u>fruit</u> of your womb and the <u>fruit</u> of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock, in the land that he swore to your fathers to give you.



God promised to make Abraham’s offspring as many as the stars of the sky (Genesis 15:5). Abraham’s descendants are beyond counting.

God promised to make the nation of Israel fruitful. This had been a command to Adam in Genesis 1:28, but many years later it is mentioned as a blessing for the nation of Israel. During their time in Egypt the descendants of Abraham grew from an extended family into a nation. In Deuteronomy God’s commission is mentioned as a promise. God promises to bless His people by making them fruitful in offspring, harvests, and flocks.

After the time of David and Solomon many prophets called on the people of Israel to return to God. If the people would return to God, He would be with them and bless them. The nation split into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. Both nations continued to sin. Finally, God sent both nations into exile. Everyone expected God to return the people to the land of Israel, and put a descendant of David on the throne.

But, instead, God did something very “mysterious”. He sent the Messiah, Jesus.

Conclusion

We might like to fulfill the requirements of God’s commission. But we can’t. God must do it for us. We cannot earn our place at the table that God will set before us.

This is a humbling reality. We would like to think that we can do anything we wish to do. But when it comes to righteousness and holiness, we cannot be righteous or holy without a savior. We need Him to make us into His likeness. Only then can we become righteous and holy.

Jesus told us that He fulfilled the Law of Moses and all the hopes of the prophets (Matthew 5:17). Actually, Jesus fulfilled far more. Every deep longing in our hearts is fulfilled by Him (Luke 11:13). Every desire that God had for the people He created finds its fulfillment in Jesus.

Everyone has to live up to the plans God has for them. Will you today admit your failures to God?

Jesus can save you (2 Timothy 1:9). Ask Him.

Genesis 1:28–30

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

And God **blessed** them. And God **said** to them, “Be **fruitful** and **multiply** and **fill the earth** and **subdue** it, and have **dominion** over the **fish** of the sea and over the **birds** of the **heavens** and over **every living thing** that **moves on the earth**.” And God **said**, “Behold, I have **given** you **every plant** yielding **seed** that is on the **face** of all the **earth**, and **every tree** with **seed** in its **fruit**. You shall have them for **food**. And to **every beast** of the **earth** and to **every bird** of the **heavens** and to **everything** that **creeps** on the **earth**, **everything** that has the **breath of life**, I have **given every green plant** for **food**.” And it was so.

([ESV](#))

Israel's Big Shoes

Often when someone is given a task that used to belong to someone else, we say that that person has big shoes to fill. Jesus had big shoes to fill. God put Jesus on earth to fulfill the role that had been belonged to the nation of Israel. God had a blueprint for the nation of Israel that was never fulfilled. The blueprint for Israel was based on the commission given to Adam, but then it was extended to the entire nation of Israel. What had applied to one man, was applied to an entire nation.

With Jesus the reverse process took place. The commission given to the nation of Israel was applied to a single individual, Jesus. One way to understand how Jesus could represent the nation of Israel is that He was the King of Israel. Like other kings, he represented the nation He ruled.

How did Jesus fulfill the blueprint for Israel?

Once Jesus fulfilled the goal of God's blueprint for Israel the next stage of God's plan began. Waiting was no longer needed. Fulfillment had come.

<p>3 And he said to me, "<u>You are my servant, Israel</u>, in whom I will be glorified."</p> <p>4 But I said, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the Lord, and my recompense with my God."</p> <p>5 And now the Lord says, <u>he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him;</u> and that Israel might be gathered to him—for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord, and my God has become my strength—</p> <p>6 he says:</p> <p>"<u>It is too light a thing</u> that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."</p> <p>(Isaiah 49:3-6)</p>	<p>Jesus is called Israel, in this prophecy about the Messiah, Jesus Christ.</p> <p>The incarnation is described.</p> <p>The purpose of Jesus' life on earth is to bring Israel back to God.</p> <p>Jesus' mission is bigger than bringing only Israel back to God.</p> <p>Jesus' mission is also to all the nations of earth. Jesus' salvation will extend to entire planet.</p>
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How do those who believe in Jesus fulfill the blueprint for Israel?

<p>¹⁶ Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.</p> <p>²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.</p> <p>²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:16, 26, 29)</p>	<p>Paul says that Genesis 12:7 referring to Abraham's offspring is best understood as referring to Jesus, rather than the nation of Israel.</p> <p>Through faith in Christ, believers are "sons of God." And, also, Abraham's offspring.</p>
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<p>³ how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to the <u>sons of men</u> in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ⁶ This <u>mystery</u> is that the <u>Gentiles</u> are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and</p>	<p>In past ages, people didn't know this.</p> <p>Through Jesus, believers are heirs to the promises of Abraham, part of the same body of people.</p>
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partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Ephesians 3:3-6)

Were Gentiles always part God's blueprint for Israel?

²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— ²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? ²⁵ As indeed he says in Hosea,

"Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,'
and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'

²⁶ "And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,'
there they will be called 'sons of the living God.' " (Romans 9:22-26)

Paul quotes a prophecy of Hosea, Gentiles will become God's people in the end times.

²¹ "And in that day I will answer, declares the Lord,
I will answer the heavens,
and they shall answer the earth,
²² and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and they shall answer Jezreel,
²³ and I will sow her for myself in the land.
And I will have mercy on No Mercy,
and **I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people';**
and **he shall say, 'You are my God.'** " (Hosea 2:21-23)

Hosea says, those who previously were not God's people will become God's people.

The mark of God's people

- (a) Genetic bloodline, or
- (b) Faith in the blood of Christ.

Parallels Terms for Israel and for Believers in Jesus

Called Beloved	<p>12 Of Benjamin he said, <u>"The beloved of the Lord</u> dwells in safety. The High God surrounds him all day long, and dwells between his shoulders." and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation. (Deuteronomy33:12)</p>	<p>4 For we know, brothers loved <u>by God</u>, that he has chosen you, (1 Thessalonians 1:4)</p>
Vineyard/Cultivated Field	<p>Let me sing for <u>my beloved</u> my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had <u>a vineyard</u> on a very fertile hill. ² He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. (Isaiah 5:1-2)</p> <p>¹⁰ Many shepherds have destroyed <u>my vineyard</u>; they have trampled down my portion; they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. (Jeremiah 12:10)</p>	<p>⁹ And he began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted <u>a vineyard</u> and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while. ¹⁰ When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty- handed. ¹¹ And he sent another servant. But they also beat and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. ¹² And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out. ¹³ Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.' ¹⁴ But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.' ¹⁵ And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (Luke 20:9-15a)</p>
Olive Tree	<p>⁶ his shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be <u>like the olive</u>, and his fragrance like Lebanon. (Hosea 14:6)</p>	<p>¹⁷ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild <u>olive shoot</u>, were <u>grafted in</u> among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, ²⁴ For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild <u>olive tree</u>, and <u>grafted</u>, contrary to nature,</p>

		<p><u>into a cultivated olive tree</u>, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree. (Romans 11:17, 24)</p>
Seed of Abraham	<p>⁷ Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “To <u>your offspring</u> I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. (Genesis 12:7, see also Gen 13:5-6; 15:5; 17:8)</p>	<p>²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ’s, then <u>you are Abraham’s offspring</u>, heirs according to promise. (Galatians 3:28&29)</p>
Wife / Bride of Yahweh/Christ	<p>⁵ For your Maker is your <u>husband</u>, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.</p> <p>⁶ For the Lord has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. (Isaiah 54:5-6)</p>	<p>² For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I <u>betrothed you</u> to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin <u>to Christ</u>. (2 Corinthians 11:2)</p> <p>²⁵ Husbands, love your <u>wives</u>, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ <u>so that he might present the church to himself</u> in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:25-27)</p>