



the
STORY
of
GOD

THROUGH THE STORY
OF SCRIPTURE



new testament



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Introduction

Introduction to the Story of God through the Story of Scripture

The Bible is one true story that declares God's plan from the beginning of creation. All of it points to Him. It is through comprehending His story as a whole (the metanarrative), that we are able to understand the world in which we live: the problems we face, the solution, and how it all affects us in our daily lives. As we gain a fuller appreciation of God, our reverence for Him increases.

Our desire for this study is that we may learn how the Bible unites to form one narrative. We also hope our confidence in reading the Word will expand, resulting in overflowing worship and awe of the Lord. As we behold Him in the details, may we begin to grasp His faithfulness and goodness to us through Christ.

This Bible Study is Divided into 12 Sections



Creation & Crisis

In the beginning of the Story, God created the world and everything in it, including the first two people. They walked with the Lord in intimacy, however, they chose to disobey God and sin entered the world. The results of their sin were consequences that we still struggle with today: sin, pain, death, and separation from God. Thus began the crisis of sin.



Covenant

In response to the crisis, God began to point toward His plan for redemption. He established a covenant with a man named Abraham. A covenant is an

agreement between two parties that specifies requirements (and usually consequences) for at least one party. The rest of the Old Testament will hinge on this covenant and will ultimately be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.



Calling Out

Generations later, Abraham's descendants found themselves oppressed as slaves of Egypt. The Lord raised up a leader named Moses. God used Moses to deliver them out of slavery through a series of plagues. The exodus out of Egypt foreshadowed the deliverance we have as slaves to sin and death through our Messiah Jesus.



Commandments

After God delivered His people, He gave them the Law in the form of commandments so that they could live within the boundaries He had established for them. God set the boundaries in such a way that they would enjoy the blessings that came from God's presence when they walked in obedience to Him.



Conquest & Canaanization

God raised up a leader named Joshua to lead the charge into the promised land (Canaan). After the death of Joshua and during the time of the judges, God's people lived in the promised land, yet began to rebel against Him.



Creation of the Kingdom

Though God was their king, His people wanted an earthly king which He gave them. In this section of the Story, the twelve tribes of Israel lived in a united kingdom centralized in Jerusalem. God made a covenant with King David that He would give David a descendant whose kingdom was

established forever, which pointed to Jesus. They enjoyed God's presence in the tabernacle up until the time when David's son, King Solomon, built a temple. God's presence had dwelt in the tabernacle and moved with the people as they traveled through the wilderness. The temple was to be a permanent dwelling place for God.



Communion & Common Sense in the Kingdom

Unlike the rest of the Story so far, this section is primarily poetic and not chronological. The Psalms are a book of songs displaying the intimate relationship between God and His people. Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon are wisdom books which contain instructions for wise living and relationships.



Crumbling of the Kingdom

After Solomon died, a civil war resulted in the splitting of Israel into two different kingdoms: Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah (the southern kingdom). During this time, God sent prophets to warn the people and to try to move them to repentance. They spoke of judgments that would come if the people continued in their sin and consistently welcomed God's people to return to Him. The prophets also spoke of hope in a future Messiah who will bring redemption.

Despite being warned, God's people didn't listen and judgments came. First Israel was conquered by the Assyrians, then Judah was conquered by the Babylonians. Both kingdoms were exiled from the promised land.



Captivity & Coming Home

The people of Judah were captives in Babylon, but God was still at work (as we see in the book of Daniel). After a time in exile, the people returned to the promised land, however they were still under foreign rule. The Old

Testament ends with anticipation of the coming Messiah, yet what followed was 400 years of silence.



Christ

After the long period of silence, Jesus, the Son of God, was born as a baby. He lived a perfect life without any sin. He came sharing the good news of salvation through faith in Him. He spoke of the fulfillment of the covenant promises. Jesus taught, performed miracles, and drew a group of twelve disciples to Himself. God's plan unfolded as Jesus died on the cross taking the punishment for our sin and was raised from the dead giving us victory over sin and death.



Church

The good news of Jesus' death and resurrection went out and those who repented and believed in Jesus became part of His body, the church. Jesus' ministry continued through His people. The Holy Spirit came to live in the members of the church, empowering them to know God and make disciples of all nations. While the Jews were part of God's people from the beginning in the Old Testament, the Gentiles were grafted into the people of God through Jesus. As both Jews and Gentiles came to a saving faith in Jesus, God's desire to bless all nations through Abraham was finally fulfilled.



Consummation

God's promises will come to fulfillment when He destroys evil and death. His creation will be restored as the new heavens and new earth are ushered in. Those who have rebelled against God and refuse to recognize Jesus as Lord will suffer judgment and separation from God. Those who have trusted in Jesus will live with Him face to face forever. There will be no more sin or death or mourning or pain!

Week 16



Where are we in the Great Story?

Christ: Jesus Enters Our World

Key Players

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, John the Baptist

Books of the Bible

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

Key Verse

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

—John 1:14

Group Ice Breaker

Describe a time when you received something after anticipating it for an extended time.

Making Connections

For over four hundred years, God was silent. The people had the Scriptures, but no prophets to speak for God. Generations of people lived and died, waiting for the promised Messiah to arrive. God was silent, but He was still actively working, preparing the world for Jesus at just the right time.

In Galatians 4:4–5, Paul writes, “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” After over four hundred years of quiet, the fullness of time had come. God shouted into the silence, and Jesus was born.

Jesus is the very center of God’s story and human history. His incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension is often referred to as the “Christ Event.” Jesus’ life was so impactful that even time itself is partitioned according to His birth. The designation BC stands for “Before Christ,” and AD stands for “Anno Domini,” meaning “in the year of the Lord.”

“Son of Man” is a title that Jesus often used for Himself, highlighting His humanity and His role as the representative of humanity. It reflects His connection to us and His experience of human life (Luke 9:58). “Son of God,” on the other hand, emphasizes His divine nature and unique relationship with God the Father. It affirms His identity as the second person of the Trinity and His authority over all creation (John 1:14). Together, these titles reveal the fullness of who Jesus is—fully God and fully man, our Savior and Redeemer.

Background Information

The accounts of the life of Jesus were recorded by four different men, each with a different perspective on the same events. These accounts are called “the Gospels,” meaning “good news.”

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Author’s Background	Apostle, Jewish, Tax Collector	Close Relationship with the Apostle Peter, Jewish	Learned from Paul, Gentile, Physician	Apostle, Jewish, Fisherman
Original Audience	Jews	Greek-Speaking World/Romans	Gentiles	The World
Jesus As	Prophesied King	Suffering Servant	Son of Man	Son of God
Key Phrases	Fulfilled/ Kingdom of Heaven	Immediately	Son of Man	Believe
Emphasis	Sermons	Miracles	Parables	Teachings
Genealogy	Traced Back to Abraham	None	Traced Back to Adam	None

Day 1

Read *Luke 1:1-2:5* and *Matthew 1*.

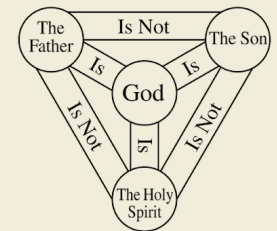
1. An angel was sent by God to prepare two families for miraculous births. Compare the stories of Zechariah, Mary, and Joseph.

	Zechariah	Mary	Joseph
Verses To Read	Luke 1:5-22	Luke 1:26-55	Matthew 1:18-25
What the Angel Tells Them			
Their Concerns			
Their Responses			

2. What similarities did you notice between these three encounters? What differences?

3. What is the significance of Jesus being called, “Immanuel”? See also *John 1:14*.

The relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is called the “Trinity.” The diagram expresses the three truths of the Trinity: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct persons; each one is God, and there is only one God.



4. What does Mary's answer to the angel in Luke 1:38 say about God and her relationship with Him?

5. Read these Old Testament prophecies. How were they fulfilled?

Isaiah 7:14

Micah 5:2

Malachi 3:1

6. How do we see all three persons of the Trinity active or at work in Luke 1?

Going Deeper

Genealogies were important to establish the legitimacy of a ruler. Reflect back on the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12:1-3; 15:13-18; 17:9-11, 19; and 22:15-18) and the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7:12-13). How did the genealogies in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 show that Jesus fulfilled those covenants?

Matthew included five women, some of whom were Gentiles, in the genealogy of Jesus. Why would this have been unusual? Why do you think Matthew included them? What do the genealogies of Jesus reveal about who God is and what He has done?

 **Key Verse**

Write John 1:14 below.

 **Prayer and Reflection**

In humility, Mary praised God for how He chose her, blessed her, and also blessed His people. Spend some time praising God for how He has chosen you and blessed you.

Contrary to most nativity sets displayed at Christmas, the wise men did not come to see Jesus in the stable. They actually saw Jesus later when His family was in a house (Matt 2:11). To learn more about the scientific evidence for the Bethlehem star, scan the QR code.



The gifts the wise men brought for Jesus were symbolic. Gold was for kings, frankincense was used by priests in worship, and myrrh was used for burials.

Day 2

Read Luke 2 and Matthew 2.

1. In what ways was the birth of Jesus not fitting for the arrival of a king? What does this say about God?

2. In Luke 2:10, the angel told the shepherds, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” In what ways was the birth of Jesus good news of great joy for all people, for all time?

3. How did the following respond to the birth of Jesus? How do their responses speak to Jesus’ identity?

The Shepherds

The Angels

The Magi

Simeon

Anna

Going Deeper

How did the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh point to the identity of Jesus and what He would do?

4. What events did Matthew point out in chapter 2 that fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies he mentions?

5. We have little recorded about the childhood of Jesus. What does Luke 2:40–52 say about Jesus between His infancy and His adult life? How does this show how He relates to us as humans?

Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for John 1:14 below.

“And the _____ became _____ and dwelt among _____, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Prayer and Reflection

How has Jesus been good news and great joy for you? Respond to Jesus with praise and thanksgiving for how He has brought you great joy.

Day 3

Read John 1:1-18.

1. Instead of the traditional story of Jesus' birth, John's gospel introduces Jesus as "the Word." How would that impact people who had not heard God speak for over four hundred years?

2. Compare John 1:1-5 with Genesis 1:1-5. What parallel words or themes do you see? What does this say about Jesus as God?

3. How does John 1:14 speak to Jesus being human?

4. How does Jesus make the Father known? See Hebrews 1:3-6, John 14:8-11.

5. John is showing in 1:1-18 that He is longing for a personal relationship with us. In 1:12, who is it that can come into a personal relationship with God?



Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for John 1:14 below.

“And the Word _____ flesh and _____ among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the _____ _____ from the Father, _____ of grace and truth.”



Prayer and Reflection

The God of all creation wants to be in relationship with you! Spend time reflecting on your response to His desire for you. Write a prayer of praise to Him that by receiving Him and believing in His name, you are given the right to be His child.

Parallel passages: Luke 3:1–22 and Mark 1:1–11.

The baptism of John was for repentance of sins to prepare the people for the Messiah. Christian baptism today is different as it symbolizes identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Day 4

Read Matthew 3 and John 1:19–34.

It had been hundreds of years since God sent a prophet to speak to Israel. The people knew from the Old Testament to expect someone who would come to prepare the way for the Messiah (Isa 40:1–11; Mal 3:1–2, 4:5–6).

1. What was John’s message to the people when he preached? What did he say his role was in the kingdom?

2. In what ways did John prepare the way for Jesus?

3. John hesitated when Jesus came to him to be baptized. How did Jesus change John’s mind?



Going Deeper

People have wrestled with the purpose of Jesus’ baptism for millenia. What do you think was the purpose of Him being baptized since He was without sin?

4. How do you see all three persons of the Trinity together in community at Jesus' baptism?

5. At His baptism, before starting His ministry, what was the significance of God declaring, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased"?



Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for John 1:14 below.

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt _____ us, and we have seen _____, glory as of the only Son _____, full of _____ and _____."



Prayer and Reflection

Come to God with a heart of repentance. What things did God do to soften your heart before you were ready to hear the gospel? Praise Him for what He has done and is doing to draw you closer to Himself.

Parallel passages: Mark 1:12-13 and Luke 4:1-13.

In Week 5 of our Old Testament study we looked at Deuteronomy 6. Jesus used these Scriptures to respond to Satan's temptation.

Day 5

Read Matthew 4:1-11.

1. How was Jesus vulnerable when the devil came to tempt Him?

2. Jesus never sinned (Heb 4:15) so it is not a sin to be tempted. Satan twisted the word of God to tempt Jesus, but Jesus combated each temptation with truth from Scripture. Fill in the chart below with each temptation and Jesus' response.

Temptation	How Jesus Responded
1.	
2.	
3.	

 **Going Deeper**

What do you think was Satan's ultimate goal in these temptations?

3. How is the devil's temptation of Jesus similar to how he tempted Adam and Eve in Genesis 3? How is it different?

4. Why do you think the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted before He began His public ministry?

 **Key Verse**

Write John 1:14 from memory below.

 **Prayer and Reflection**

We are in a spiritual battle, but as believers in Jesus we can know that we have access to the Lord's mighty power to take our stand against the devil's schemes. How are you preparing yourself for this spiritual battle? Spend time writing praise to Him for His power, protection, and presence with you as you face spiritual attacks.

Jesus: The Center of God's Story

After years of silence, the promised Messiah came. God brought Jesus into the world to speak to us, to show us the Father, to fulfill what the prophets foretold, and to bring hope to our crisis of sin and separation from God.

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 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.”

—Hebrews 1:1-2

Wrap Up

Write out the key verse for the following section:

Christ: Jesus Enters Our World

In this week's study, what did you learn about God that was new to you?



Week 17



Where are we in the Great Story?

Christ: Jesus' Message

Key Players

Jesus, Disciples, Followers

Books of the Bible

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

Key Verse

“And he said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.’”

—Luke 9:23

Group Ice Breaker

Have you ever thought something was a certain way only to find out later that you were wrong?

Making Connections

Jesus came to earth as a baby. He grew up, became strong, and increased in wisdom. After Jesus was baptized, He began His public ministry. He taught in the synagogues, performed miracles, proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God, and brought others to work alongside Him. This new kingdom of God was coming, but not in the way they expected.

The phrases “kingdom of God” or “kingdom of heaven” both refer to the same thing: God’s personal rule or reign over His creation, including His people. Matthew uses the term kingdom of heaven and the other gospel writers use the kingdom of God.

Day 1

Read Matthew 4:12–17 and Isaiah 52:7–10.

The Jews held two basic beliefs about the kingdom of God. First, they believed that in present time God reigned over all creation. Second, they looked forward to a time when the Messiah would come, defeat His enemies, and establish His reign in a physical kingdom on the earth. For many, this meant a rescue from the oppression of Rome. However, Jesus brought an upside down kingdom. His focus was not on an earthly kingdom or earthly reign. His focus was on an eternal kingdom with eternal reign.

A Jewish Understanding of the Kingdom

God Sets Up His Earthly Kingdom

This Age	Age to Come
Sin and Rebellion	Righteousness
Suffering	Comfort and Safety
Satan and the Demonic	No Evil and Suffering
Diseases and Death	Wholeness
Darkness	No Death, Only Life
War with Evil	Presence of God

1. According to Isaiah 52:7–10, the good news proclaimed to the people of Israel was that the LORD would return to Zion to reign as king, bringing peace, happiness, and salvation. In Matthew 4:17, Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” How would Jesus’ words impact the people who were longing for the fulfillment of Isaiah 52?

2. In Matthew 5:3, Jesus taught, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” What does it mean to be poor in spirit?

3. The Pharisees considered themselves to be the righteous ones. How did Jesus challenge that in Matthew 5:20? How then can we enter the kingdom of heaven? See Ephesians 2:1–9.

4. Read Matthew 18:3–4 (also in Mark 10:15 and Luke 18:17). What does it mean to become like a child to enter the kingdom?

5. How was the kingdom of God that Jesus taught about different from what many Jews were expecting from the Messiah?

A parable is a short story that is told to illustrate a truth, with certain details in the story representing other things. Jesus often taught with parables, which fulfilled Psalm 78:2, “I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter utter dark sayings from of old...”

 **Going Deeper**

What do you learn from Jesus about the kingdom of God from these parables?

Mustard seed and leaven (Matt 13:31–33)

Hidden treasure and pearl of great value (Matt 13:44–46)

The workers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1–16)

 **Key Verse**

Write Luke 9:23 below.

 **Prayer and Reflection**

Spend some time thinking about what it means to you that Jesus is your King. Ask Him to reveal the areas of your life that He wants you to submit to His reign. Write your prayer to Him.

Day 2

Read John 3.

1. Who was Nicodemus, and what did he recognize about Jesus? Why do you think he came to Jesus by night (v2)?

2. Jesus told Nicodemus that unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. What does it mean to be born again?

3. Jesus refers to Moses lifting up a serpent in the wilderness. Read Numbers 21:4–9. How does this story relate to Jesus' words in John 3:14–15?

4. What is the good news of the kingdom in John 3:16–17? What does it mean to have eternal life?

5. What did Jesus reveal about the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? See verses 34–36.

Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Luke 9:23 below.

“And he said _____, ‘If anyone would _____
_____, let him deny himself and take up his cross
and follow me.’”

Prayer and Reflection

Reflect on how much God loves you that He would invite you into an eternal relationship with Himself: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Have you responded to His invitation? Write a prayer to Him expressing your thanks for all that He has done for you.

Day 3

Read John 1:35–51; Matthew 4:18–22; and Mark 2:13–14, 3:13–19.

1. How did these disciples respond to Jesus when He asked them to follow Him?

2. Jesus had disciples other than just the twelve, according to Luke 8:1–3 and 10:1–4. Why would Jesus appoint the twelve specifically as apostles, according to Mark 3:13–15?

3. What did it cost Jesus' disciples to leave and follow Him? Can you imagine how you would respond if Jesus approached you at work and told you to leave it all and follow Him?

4. In Luke 9:23, what did Jesus say it would cost to be His disciple? What does it mean for someone to take up their cross daily?

A disciple is a student, learner, apprentice, or follower. An apostle is a messenger or one who is sent. All apostles were disciples, but not all disciples were apostles.

Bartholomew and Nathanael are names for the same disciple. There were two disciples named Judas, Judas Iscariot and Judas son of James, who was also referred to as Thaddaeus.

5. As descendants of Abraham, the twelve tribes of Israel were chosen to be a light to the nations (Isa 42:6). What similarities are there between how God used the twelve tribes of Israel and how He would work through these twelve disciples and future spiritual generations of disciples? See Matthew 28:19–20.

Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Luke 9:23 below.

“And he said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny _____ and take up _____ daily and follow _____.’”

Prayer and Reflection

Spend some time considering what God may be asking you to do as His disciple. Examine your heart and write out ways God might be calling you to deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Him. Thank Him for calling you to follow Him.

Day 4

1. Read Matthew 11:1–6. When John asked if Jesus truly was the One who was to come, what did Jesus tell them would be evidence of Jesus being the One?

2. Jesus made the Father known through His miracles. What do you learn about God through each of these miracles?

Calming the storm (Matt 8:23–27)

Feeding five thousand (Mark 6:30–44)

Bleeding woman (Luke 8:43–48)

Woman with a disabling spirit (Luke 13:10–17)

The official's son (John 4:46–54)

Raising Lazarus (John 11:1–45)

Week Seventeen

The Gospels record about forty miracles, divided into four basic types: healings, exorcisms, raising the dead, and nature miracles.

3. Read Revelation 21:4–5. How do the miracles of Jesus give us a picture of what it will be like in the new heavens and the new earth?

Going Deeper

Look back at Week 2 of our Old Testament study. In Genesis 1, God created everything as it should be. Humans messed it up, resulting in separation from God and death. How do Jesus' miracles demonstrate His power to restore what was broken because of sin?

Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Luke 9:23 below.

“And he said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him _____ himself and _____ his cross daily and _____ me.’”

Prayer and Reflection

Reflect on what God has done in your life that is a testimony to His miraculous power at work in you. Consider how your life might have been different apart from His work in you and for you. Spend time thanking Him for what He has done. Who might be encouraged by hearing what God has done for you?

Day 5

Read Matthew 5-7.

The primary audience for Jesus' Sermon on the Mount was His followers. Instead of teaching how to enter the kingdom, Jesus was teaching His followers how to live in the kingdom in community with other disciples.

Chapter 5 focuses on how believers should behave based on how we interpret what we believe. Chapter 6 is, generally, how we expand the kingdom of God on earth, and chapter 7 is a combination of 5 and 6, with a warning regarding those who follow the teachings of Jesus without sacrificially following Him.

1. How is Jesus' teaching on the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-10 different from what we hear in our culture?

2. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus said He did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them. What does it mean that He fulfilled the Law and the Prophets? See Romans 3:21-22.

3. In Matthew 5:48 (and similarly in Leviticus 11:44-45) Jesus says, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." How does Jesus make this possible?

4. Jesus teaches us how to pray in Matthew 6:9–13. How does this expand your understanding of prayer and what we should be praying for?

5. When Jesus finished His teaching, the crowds were astonished. What was it that amazed the crowds, and what did that say about Jesus?

Key Verse

Write Luke 9:23 from memory below.

Prayer and Reflection

Set a timer for ten minutes and use the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:9–13 to pray in the following ways:

- Praise the Lord
- Pray for God's kingdom and will
- Pray for God's provision
- Have a time of confession and repentance
- Pray for protection from Satan's attacks

Jesus: The Center of God's Story

Jesus was the fulfillment of prophecy. He taught with authority, and His message was to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, to invite us to enter the kingdom, and to teach us how to live in the kingdom.

Wrap Up

Write out the key verse for each of the following sections:

Christ: Jesus Enters Our World

Christ: Jesus' Message

In this week's study, what did you learn about God that was new to you?



Week 18



Where are we in the Great Story?

Christ: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem

Key Players

Jesus, Disciples, Pharisees, and Teachers of the Law

Books of the Bible

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

Key Verse

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

—Luke 19:10

Group Ice Breaker

When have you felt like an outsider and someone came alongside you and made you feel seen and heard? Or when were you the someone who came alongside another person? How did that impact you?

Making Connections

Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom of God had come. He called a small group of disciples to be with Him, to learn from Him, and to minister alongside Him. Jesus challenged the thinking and practices of those who heard His teaching. To many He was a stumbling block as they clung to their old way of thinking, but to others, He was the one they had been waiting for.

“For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

—1 Corinthians 1:22-24

The Pharisees considered those who opposed God's law to be sinners. The Pharisees considered anyone who didn't measure up to the additional purity rules the religious leaders had created to be sinners as well. These "sinners," including those with certain diseases, deformities, dishonorable occupations or pasts, were excluded from religious and social culture.

Day 1

1. How was Jesus a friend to the outcast in these passages?

Matthew 9:10–13

Mark 1:40–45

Luke 19:1–10

John 4:1–26

2. Why do you think Jesus' actions and teaching about the poor and outcasts upset the Pharisees so much (Matt 9:10–13)?

3. Look back at the following weeks from our Old Testament study. How did God show His heart for outcasts in the Old Testament?

Week 3 Day 4

Week 6 Day 5

Week 8 Day 1

4. Read Luke 18:9–14. What was the difference between the Pharisee and the tax collector, and what Jesus values?

5. Read Matthew 25:31–46. How did this parable teach Jesus’ followers to be like Him?

Key Verse

Write Luke 19:10 below.

Prayer and Reflection

We are all needy outcasts. Have you come to the Lord in this posture of humility, recognizing your need? Ask Him to give you a right heart before Him. How does understanding what Jesus has done for you move you to care for others? Spend some time with the Lord asking Him to show you how you can follow His example in being a friend to outcasts.

Day 2

1. Jesus faced opposition from four different groups. For each group, describe what that opposition looked like and how Jesus responded to the opposition.

Satan and the demonic—Mark 1:21–27, 5:1–20. (Also look back at Week 16 Day 5 for what you learned when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness.)

His family—Mark 3:21, 6:1–6.

His disciples—Mark 8:31–38.

The Jewish religious leaders—Mark 2:23–28, 3:1–6, 7:1–23. (Almost every chapter in Mark contains examples of these conflicts.)

2. What patterns or principles did you see in how Jesus dealt with opposition that teach us how to respond when facing opposition?



Going Deeper

Read Matthew 22:34–45. In verses 41–45, Jesus simply asked a series of questions. What was the value of Jesus asking them questions instead of just telling them what He wanted them to know?



Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Luke 19:10 below.

“For the _____ came to seek and to save the lost.”



Prayer and Reflection

Where are you experiencing opposition as you follow the Lord? Remember that we are in a spiritual battle, but you have God’s power available to you. Think about any lies that you have been allowing to influence you in this battle. Like Jesus did, counter each opposition with truth from God’s word.

Day 3

Read Matthew 16:13–20 and Mark 8:27–37.

1. The disciples told Jesus that people were saying He was John the Baptist or Elijah or one of the prophets. The word “you” in Jesus’ next question was plural, indicating that He addressed it to the entire group. Who answered, and what did he say?

2. Matthew’s account includes some additional details. What stands out to you about Jesus’ response in Matthew 16:17?

3. Many consider Peter’s confession to be a turning point in Jesus’ ministry. Why do you think it was so important?

4. Jesus then predicts His death. In Matthew 16:22, how did Peter’s rebuke indicate his expectations of the Messiah?

5. Jesus responded to Peter's rebuke in Matthew 16 with "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hinderance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." What similarities can you see between Peter rebuking Jesus and Satan's temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4?

Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Luke 19:10 below.

"For the Son of Man _____ to seek and to save _____."

Prayer and Reflection

Imagine Jesus standing before you and asking you, "But who do you say that I am?" Spend some time thoughtfully considering how you would answer Him. Clarify your thoughts by writing out what you would say along with the importance this has for you.

Parallel passages:
Mark 9:2–13 and
Luke 9:28–36.

“The Greek word translated ‘transfigured,’ metamorphoô, means to be physically and visibly transformed. Rather than imagining a light shining on Jesus, the idea is that brilliant, glorious light radiates out from within Jesus.”

—Duvall and Hays, 172

Day 4

Read Matthew 17:1–13.

1. Peter, James, and John were led by Jesus up a high mountain. Describe what they saw and heard.

2. Jesus brought Peter, James, and John to witness the revelation of His glory as He was transfigured. What do God’s words say about Jesus’ deity?

3. Why was it important for these three to know about Jesus’ identity in preparation for the coming days?

4. Read Matthew 5:17. Moses represented the Law, and Elijah represented the Prophets. What do you think the significance was of Moses and Elijah’s presence at the transfiguration?

5. Compare what God says here in Matthew 17:5 to what God said at Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:17. Looking at the context for the transfiguration, what do you think God wanted them to listen to Jesus about?



Going Deeper

How does the transfiguration connect to the kingdom of God?



Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Luke 19:10 below.

“_____ the Son of Man came _____ and
_____ the lost.”



Prayer and Reflection

Spend some time reflecting on the glory of God. How do you think you would respond if you were on that mountain? Would you fall down at His feet? Would you burst into song? Spend some time now in worship of the Lord. He alone is worthy to receive glory, honor, and power! Praise Him!

Day 5

Read Mark 8:31–38, 9:30–37, and 10:32–45.

1. Jesus predicted His death to His disciples on three different occasions. Fill in the chart below to show what He told them, how the disciples responded in each case, and how Jesus then taught them about following Him.

Verses	Details of His Prediction of His Death	How the Disciples Responded with Pride or Ignorance	How Jesus Taught Them What It Means to Follow Him
Mark 8:31-38			
Mark 9:30-37			
Mark 10:32-45			

2. What is the “upside down” message of the kingdom Jesus taught in Mark 10:42–45?

3. Read Luke 9:51–53. What words are used to describe how Jesus went to Jerusalem, knowing what would happen to Him there? What does this show about Jesus?

4. In Luke 19:41–44, Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem. What does this reveal about Jesus?

 **Key Verse**

Write Luke 19:10 from memory below.

 **Prayer and Reflection**

Spend some time thinking about how Jesus, knowing what was ahead of Him in Jerusalem, set His face with determination to go there for you. How does this invite you to a position of humility, repentance, and gratitude?

Jesus: The Center of God's Story

Jesus was the fulfillment of what was promised in the Old Testament. Jesus knew that He was the solution to the separation from God and longed for a relationship with us. Jesus resolutely moved toward the pain and suffering He would endure on the cross in order to restore what was broken in Genesis 3.

Wrap Up

Write out the key verse for each of the following sections:

Christ: Jesus Enters Our World

Christ: Jesus' Message

Christ: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem

In this week's study, what did you learn about God that was new to you?



Week 19



Where are we in the Great Story?

Christ: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Key Players

Jesus, Disciples, Lazarus, Pharisees, Pilate

Books of the Bible

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

Key Verse

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

—Mark 10:45

Group Ice Breaker

Have you ever experienced sadness or frustration over something and later been able to understand the good that may have come out of that situation?

Making Connections

Jesus arrived as the promised King, the Passover Lamb that was slain, and He brought in the new covenant by shedding His blood.

“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

—Isaiah 53:4–6

Day 1

Read John 11:1–12:19.

1. What do you learn about Jesus in the conversation between Jesus, Mary, and Martha? What can you learn from what Mary and Martha said to Jesus?

2. In John 11:45–57 and 12:9–11, what differing reactions were there to Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead?

3. How did Judas respond to what Mary did to honor Jesus at the banquet?

4. On Sunday morning, Jesus entered Jerusalem. Why do you think Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a young donkey? See Zechariah 9:9.

5. Why is this called the Triumphal Entry? What expectations did the people have of Jesus as He entered Jerusalem? Refer back to Week 17 discussing the Jewish expectations of the coming of the kingdom of God.

Significant Sites in Jesus' Life

Palestine First Century AD



1. Heals Canaanite woman's daughter
2. Peter proclaims Jesus is the Messiah
3. Sermon on the Mount*
4. Sermon on the Mount*, heals many including woman with bleeding, raises Jairus' daughter, accused of healing by Beelzebub (Matt 12:22-32)
5. Feeds 5,000*, heals the sick
6. Water to wine, heals royal official's son
7. Feeds 5,000*, heals the blind, walks on water
8. Heals Gadarene demoniac
9. Childhood home, rejected by His townspeople
10. Transfiguration*, heals epileptic child
11. Raises widow's son
12. Calms the sea
13. Baptism
14. Heals ten lepers
15. Heals many and feeds 4,000
16. Samaritan woman at the well
17. Heals a crippled woman, man with dropsy
18. Encounters two men after His resurrection
19. Teaches on end times
20. Heals a blind man
21. Impresses Jewish scholars at twelve years old, speaks with Nicodemus, man at pool of Bethesda, stoning attempt, woman caught in adultery, crucifixion and resurrection
22. Raises Lazarus
23. Birthplace

* Possible Site



Key Verse

Write Mark 10:45 below.



Prayer and Reflection

Are you walking through a circumstance in which you struggle to see why God has chosen to act in a certain way? Sit with the Lord. Bring your honest questions to Him. Ask Him to show you what truth you need to believe about Him in this. Take time to listen for what the Holy Spirit shows you.

Parallel passages:
Matthew 21:12–22;
Luke 19:45–48.

Jesus condemned a fig tree for not producing figs when it wasn't the season for figs.

“As the tree falsely advertises through its leaves that it has fruit to offer, so the temple also leaves the false impression that it is the place where people can truly meet God. The time has come to judge the fruitless temple and replace it with the true way to God—Jesus Himself.”

—Duvall and Hays, 188

Day 2

Read Mark 11:12–26.

1. Mark places his account of Jesus cleansing the temple between Jesus' interactions with the fig tree. What similarities are there between cursing the fig tree and cleansing the temple?

2. What examples can you think of in our culture of people or groups falsely advertising fruit where there is none?



Going Deeper

The next day Peter noticed the fig tree had miraculously withered. When he called it to Jesus' attention, His response was about faith and prayer. What could Jesus have meant by His response (Mark 11:23–25)?

3. In John 15:1–17, Jesus teaches us the true way to bear fruit. Instead of worrying about bearing fruit on the outside, how does Jesus teach us to bear fruit?

Read Matthew 24.

4. In Matthew 24:3, the disciples asked Jesus about signs of His coming at the end of the age. What did Jesus say about the destruction of the temple?

5. What did Jesus tell them to do in preparation for His return?

Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Mark 10:45 below.

“For even the Son of Man _____ to be served
_____ to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Prayer and Reflection

How authentic are you in your relationship with God? Are you bearing fruit? Are you walking in truth? Ask the Lord to reveal any areas where you may be “falsely advertising” like the fig tree. Spend some time in repentance. Thank God that through Jesus, as you abide in Him, you will bear much fruit.

Parallel passages:

Mark 14:12–26;

Luke 22:7–20;

1 Corinthians 11:23–26.

Washing others’

feet was usually

performed only by

non-Jewish slaves. It

was considered to be

so dirty, even Jewish

slaves were forbidden

from doing it.

Day 3

Read John 13–14 and Matthew 26:14–30.

1. What was significant about Jesus washing the disciples’ feet when it was such a demeaning task?

2. What does Jesus’ willingness to wash Judas’ feet, knowing how Judas would betray Him, teach us about how we should serve others?

3. Jesus’ final meal with His twelve disciples is often called the Last Supper. It was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread as they prepared for their Passover celebration. Look back at Week 4 Day 4 of our Story of God study and Exodus 12:1–28. What were they celebrating, and how was this a picture of what Jesus was about to do?



Going Deeper

In Matthew 26:26–29, how did Jesus connect the Passover story to His coming death and resurrection?

4. After telling the disciples He would be going away, in what ways did Jesus comfort His disciples in John 14–17?

John 14:1–4

John 14:6

John 14:15–31

John 15:1–17

John 16:33

John 17



Going Deeper

What do you learn about Jesus from reading His prayer in John 17? How does seeing how Jesus prayed for all who would come to believe in Him impact you personally?



Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Mark 10:45 below.

“For even the Son of Man came not _____
_____ but to serve, and to give _____
_____ as a ransom
for many.”



Prayer and Reflection

In a posture of humility, spend some time meditating on the symbolism of the Lord’s Supper. Jesus gave Himself to be the Passover Lamb for you so death would pass over you. Consider what it cost Him for your salvation. Let Him know how much you appreciate Him.

Jesus asked for the cup to be passed from Him. He asked if there was any other way for God to save the world that didn't involve the pain of Him going to the cross. Yet when He heard God's answer, He chose to do it, for us!

Day 4

Read Matthew 26:36–56; Mark 14:32–72; Luke 22:39–53; and John 18:1–11.

1. How did Jesus describe the agony He was experiencing to His disciples? How did He express it to the Father in His prayer? How does this encourage you to pray vulnerably before the Lord?

2. How was Jesus' relationship with the Father reflected in His prayer?

3. What did you learn about Jesus from the way the people reacted to Him in John 18:4–6?

4. Describe how Jesus responded to being betrayed and arrested.

To	How Jesus Responded
Judas	
The Soldiers and Officials	
Peter (when he cut off the servant's ear)	
The servant whose ear had been cut off	

5. What did you learn about Jesus from His responses?

Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Mark 10:45 below.

“For even the _____ came not to be served
but to serve, and to give his _____ as a _____
_____.”

Prayer and Reflection

What stirs in you when you read the honesty and anguish of Jesus’ prayer and His submission to the Father? Sit with the Lord, pouring out your heart honestly to Him. Spend some time considering if there is anything He might be asking you to submit to His will, and ask Him for help to be able to do that.

Day 5

Parallel passages:
Mark 14:53–15:47 and
Luke 22:54–23:56.

“Crucifixion was considered a painful, humiliating way to die, so horrible that Rome would not permit its own citizens to be executed in this way. Victims normally lost a great deal of blood through the scourging process. On the cross a person usually died a slow, agonizing death from asphyxiation as they became too weak to lift their body to catch another breath. Crucifixion was reserved for lower-class criminals, slaves, and foreigners.”

—Duvall and Hays, 198

Read John 18:12–19:42 and Matthew 26:57–27:66.

The Trials of Jesus		Scripture	Judge	Outcome/ Decision
Religious Trials	First	John 18:12–14	Annas	Okay to proceed
	Second	Matthew 26:57–68	Caiaphas	Death sentence; blasphemy
	Third	Matthew 27:1–2	Sanhedrin	Death sentence made legal
Secular Trials	Fourth	John 18:28–38	Pilate	Not guilty
	Fifth	Luke 23:6–12	Herod Antipas	Not guilty
	Sixth	John 18:39–19:6	Pilate	Not guilty; turned over to Jews

1. In Matthew 27:12–14, we see how Jesus stood before His accusers. What connections do you see to Isaiah 53:7?

2. Read Isaiah 53:4–6. According to this passage, why did Jesus die?



Going Deeper

In Matthew 27:45–46 darkness came over all the land, and Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Why do you think Jesus said this? See Psalm 22.

3. In John 19:30, Jesus exclaimed, “It is finished,” and surrendered His spirit to the Father. What was finished?

4. In Mark 15:37–38, Jesus breathed His last, and the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. This curtain in the temple had separated the Most Holy Place, the earthly dwelling place of God’s presence, from the rest of the temple. What did the tearing of the curtain symbolize? See Jeremiah 31:31–34, John 14:6, and Hebrews 4:14–16.

5. The Jewish leaders were afraid the disciples might steal Jesus’ body from the tomb and tell people He had been raised from the dead. In Matthew 27:62–66, what procedures were put into place to ensure that Jesus’ body would not be stolen?

 **Key Verse**

Write Mark 10:45 from memory below.

 **Prayer and Reflection**

Jesus loves you so much that He died an agonizing death for you. Reflect on God tearing the veil that separated the Holy of Holies at Jesus' death. What does this mean to you personally? How have you responded to His invitation for you to come into His presence? Write a prayer expressing your gratitude to Him.

Jesus: The Center of God's Story

Because of the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, we all have been separated from God. Jesus, knowing our need and longing to restore us to a relationship with Him, was willing to come to earth as a man and suffer and die on a cross. Sinless, He took on the sin of mankind and through His death, He took our punishment for us. He died and was buried, but thankfully, that is not the end of the story!

“Amazing love, how can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me!”

–Charles Wesley

Wrap Up

Write out the key verse for each of the following sections:

Christ: Jesus Enters Our World

Christ: Jesus' Message

Christ: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem

Christ: Jesus Dies on the Cross

In this week's study, what did you learn about God that was new to you?



Week 20



Where are we in the Great Story?

Christ: Jesus is Raised from the Dead

Key Players

Jesus and the Disciples

Books of the Bible

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, 1 Corinthians

Key Verse

“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.”

—Luke 24:5b-6a

Group Ice Breaker

Have you ever longed for someone or something impossible?

Making Connections

At this point in God’s Story, Jesus’ life and ministry had come to an abrupt end after a brutal Roman crucifixion. His body was laid in a tomb before sunset the day before Sabbath. The disciples’ hopes of Jesus being the Messiah were dashed in an instant. Their Lord was dead.

Parallel resurrection accounts can be found in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20.

Day 1

Each gospel records the author’s eyewitness account of the resurrection. Because the witnesses focused on different aspects of the story, sometimes the timeline is hard to grasp. Compare the accounts and fill in the blanks in the timeline below.

Day	Hour	Verse	Location	Event
Friday	Third Hour (9am)	Mark 15:25	Golgotha	Jesus _____
	Evening	Matthew 27:59-61	Jerusalem	_____ laid Jesus’ body in a tomb.
Saturday	Sunset-Sunset	Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1-3; Luke 24:1-3; John 20:1	Jerusalem	A group of _____ approached the tomb with Mary _____ possibly arriving first.
Sunday	Dawn	Matthew 28:2-7; Mark 16:4-7; Luke 24:2-7	Jerusalem	Mary and the other women were met by two _____, who announced Jesus’ _____.
	Dawn	Matthew 28:8, Mark 16:8)	Jerusalem	The women left the garden with a mixture of fear and _____, at first unwilling to say anything but then resolved to report to the _____.

	Not Specified	John 20:1-2	Jerusalem	Mary Magdaline may have dashed on ahead, telling _____ and _____ in advance of the arrival of the other women.
	Not Specified	Matthew 28:9-10; Luke 24:8-11	Jerusalem	Jesus met the remaining women en route and confirmed their commission to tell the disciples, along with His promise to meet them in _____. The women told the _____ who thought their words were nonsense.
	Not Specified	John 20:3-10, Luke 24:9-12	Jerusalem	Peter and John meanwhile returned to the tomb, having heard the _____s' report, and discovered it to be _____.
	Afternoon	Luke 24:13-35	The Road to _____	Jesus appeared to _____ and his unnamed companion on the road to _____.

“The evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is good in the sense that we have the kind of historical evidence you would expect to be left behind if a man did in fact rise again, and more evidence pointing in that direction than you would expect if he did not. Put another way, there is a resurrection-shaped ‘dent’ in the historical record. This is why the topic is still taken seriously, even by those who do not personally believe that a resurrection is possible.”

–John Dickson, *Life of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 157.

	Not specified	Luke 24:34	Jerusalem	Jesus made a separate appearance to _____.
	Evening	Luke 24:36–43; John 20:19–23	_____	Jesus appeared to the ten (the twelve minus Judas, Iscariot, and Thomas) behind _____ doors in the city of _____.
A week later	Not specified	John 20:24–29	Jerusalem	Jesus appeared to the _____ disciples in the same setting with _____ who was with them.

(Adapted from Duvall, Hays, 2009)

1. What insights did you glean from the exercise above?

 **Key Verse**

Write Luke 24:5b–6a below.



Prayer and Reflection

The resurrection is the greatest event in human history. This moment of rescue for all mankind and the God who made it possible deserve our undivided attention. Take a moment to ponder the resurrection, allowing yourself to be caught up in the wonder of it. Use your imagination to engage your senses and notice your feelings. What is stirring within you? Journal to God about what you are sensing.

Colossians 1:15–20 says Jesus is “the firstborn from the dead,” meaning He is the first to rise from the dead in a glorified, imperishable body. All who believe in Jesus will follow Him in resurrection.

Lee Strobel, a former atheist and journalist, set out to disprove the resurrection of Jesus, and through these studies became a believer himself. In this short video, Strobel gives several reasons why we can trust in the bodily resurrection of Jesus.



Day 2

1. Read John 20:11–18. Mary knew Jesus intimately, and yet she didn’t recognize Him when she first saw Him. What was the result of their encounter? How did Jesus reveal Himself and move her into action?

2. Read John 20:24–29. Thomas was not with the other disciples when they saw the resurrected Jesus for the first time. How did Jesus make a point to help Thomas overcome his doubts and believe?

3. Read Luke 24:36–43. List what this passage says about Jesus’ glorified body.

4. Read Romans 1:4. What was Jesus declared as a result of the resurrection?

5. Colossians 2:9–15 is a powerful passage about what the resurrection has afforded believers. What triumph is mentioned in verse fifteen?



Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Luke 24:5b-6a below.

“Why do you _____ the _____ among the dead? He is not here, but has _____.”



Prayer and Reflection

Jesus met Thomas in his doubt. Jesus wanted to show him personally that He was the risen Christ. In the same way, Jesus wants to invite us in. Do you struggle with doubts about the risen Christ? If so, spend time asking Him to meet you in your doubt. Praise Him that He cares so intimately for you that He wants to reassure you.

Look at Carravagio's intimate depiction of Thomas accepting Jesus' invitation to touch His wounds. Imagine the wonder of such an event!



Day 3

Read Luke 24.

1. Of all the miracles, Jesus' resurrection from the dead was likely the most difficult for His followers to believe. Jesus took time to interpret the Scriptures to the men on the road to Emmaus to assist their faith and renew their hope. Trace the thoughts and feelings of the men during their time with Jesus.

2. What strikes you as unusual about the interactions between Jesus and these two men who possibly knew Him before His death?

3. Jesus placed importance on the Scriptures. Why do you think He chose to explain the Scriptures rather than immediately reveal Himself as the risen Christ?

4. Thinking back on our study, what sort of things do you imagine Jesus might have mentioned on the road to Emmaus? Look over the "Jesus In" sections in our past Old Testament lessons to see how Scripture points to Him.

5. In John 20:19–23, how did Jesus send them out and what were they able to do as a result?



Going Deeper

Read Matthew 12:38–41 and John 2:18–22. How does the sign of Jonah and the sign of the temple relate to Jesus’ resurrection?



Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Luke 24:5b–6a below.

“ _____ you seek the living _____ dead? He is _____, but has risen.”



Prayer and Reflection

Cleopas and his friend needed their eyes to be opened to see Jesus in the Scriptures and recognize Him in the flesh. Their hearts burned when they heard the truths of Scripture explained. How does remembering that Jesus is near and actively speaking to you through God’s word change how you read Scripture? Ask God to open your eyes to know Him more through His word. Ask Him to make your heart burn even more for the truth about Him.

Day 4

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.”

—1 Corinthians 15:3–5

This passage is believed to contain the first creed of the early church dated as little as seven years after the resurrection of Christ.

Paul later quoted this creed to the church at Corinth in a confession of his personal faith in Christ. This creed is important to apologists, as its inception helps refute claims that suggest legend and myths crept in over time and corrupted the facts about Jesus’ resurrection.

1. Read Luke 24:45–49. What message did Jesus want to be preached?

2. Read 1 Corinthians 15:20–22 and Romans 6:5–11. In these passages, what are the implications for believers because of the resurrection?

3. According to 1 Peter 1:3–5, to what are we “born again” through Jesus’ resurrection? Where else in Scripture have we heard the term born again? See Week 17 Day 2.

4. Review 1 Corinthians 15, a passage on the resurrection. Match the verses on the left to the corresponding summaries on the right.

vv. 20–23, 45–49	Resurrection is the basis of the Christian faith.
vv. 24–28	A summary of the gospel rooted in the resurrection in what is believed to be the first creed of the early church.
vv. 9–11	Paul’s insights on resurrected bodies.
vv. 58	Paul’s position as an apostle and testimony of salvation by grace.
vv. 50–56	The resurrection subjects and destroys every rule, authority, power, and death.
vv. 35–44	Resurrection is promised through the Second Adam.
vv. 1–8	The mystery of resurrection and victory over death belong to Christ.
vv. 12–19	Serve the Lord in light of the coming resurrection.

5. How does the above passage show that the resurrection of Jesus is the solution to the problem in the Big Story of Scripture?

 **Key Verse**

Fill in the blanks for Luke 24:5b-6a below.

“Why do _____ the living among _____?
_____ not here, _____ risen.”

 **Prayer and Reflection**

Read John 11:25-26. How is your life different because of the resurrection?
Praise the Lord for how He is transforming you.

Matthew 28:18-20
is commonly
known as The Great
Commission.

Day 5

Read Matthew 28:18-20.

At this time in the Story, the disciples were living in the forty days between Jesus' resurrection and His ascension.

1. Jesus claimed all authority in heaven and on earth prior to His instructions. Why would that be important for His disciples to know as He sent them out?

2. Who did Jesus say they were to make disciples of? How was God inviting the disciples to participate in fulfilling His promise to Abraham through this command. See Week 3 Day 1.

3. Jesus instructed His disciples to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Why do you think Jesus referenced the Holy Spirit here?

4. Jesus' disciples left everything to follow Him. They spent three years with Him, watching and listening to all that He said and did. How did this prepare the disciples to teach others to obey everything Jesus had commanded them?

5. As Jesus was about to ascend to the Father, He said, "I am with you always, to the end of the age." How could this be true?

Key Verse

Write Luke 24:5b-6a from memory below.

Prayer and Reflection

Jesus is the only human who fully lived as God intended. He lived openly before the crowds and intimately with His disciples in order to show the world what the Father was like (John 14:7). Jesus did not just impart knowledge. He lived truth and love. How are you following in the ways of Jesus?

Jesus: The Center of God's Story

The resurrection is the final blow to sin and death first introduced in Genesis 3. It is the victory alluded to in Genesis 3:15. It is at the resurrection that the world sees the power of God on display and announces to the earth that Jesus is Lord. It is in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus that the curse of sin is broken. The perfect lamb died to atone for our sins. Sin, Satan, and death itself were defeated with the resurrection of Christ. As followers of Jesus, we have the same promise and guarantee of our future resurrection and life as God's new creation.

Wrap Up

Write out the key verse for each of the following sections:

Christ: Jesus Enters Our World

Christ: Jesus' Message

Christ: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem

Christ: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Christ: Jesus Is Raised from the Dead

In this week's study, what did you learn about God that was new to you?



Week 21



Where are we in the Great Story?

Church: The Coming of the Spirit

Key Players

Jesus, Holy Spirit, and the Disciples

Book of the Bible

Acts

Key Verse

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

—Acts 2:42

Group Ice Breaker

Have you ever witnessed a miracle?

Making Connections

The book of Luke concludes with the revelation of God’s plan for redemption of the whole world through Jesus. In the first chapters of Acts, God sent the Holy Spirit to live within His disciples and accomplish His mission. As the gospel moved forward in the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus continued to fulfill the promise to bless all nations with the disciples as His representatives.

Day 1

Read Acts 1.

Jesus made appearances for forty days after His resurrection. During this time, He led the disciples to various locations in the region.

1. On the map below, draw a line connecting the cities the disciples traveled between the resurrection and ascension (you may reference the chart on Week 20 Day 1).



In light of everything they had learned and experienced, what do you imagine the conversations were like between the disciples and others they met along the journey from resurrection to ascension?

2. Jesus told His disciples they would “be My witnesses in Jerusalem.” Read the account in Matthew 10:5–42 when Jesus sent out the twelve to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit during His earthly ministry. How would this have helped the disciples after Jesus’ ascension?

3. Skim Luke 24:36–53 and refer to Acts 1. What did Jesus promise would come soon?

4. What did the angels promise would happen?

5. Where did the disciples go when they returned to Jerusalem? What did they do there?

 **Going Deeper**

Jesus blessed His disciples while He was ascending. Why do you think Luke included this detail?

 **Key Verse**

Write out Acts 2:42 below.



Prayer and Reflection

What does it look like to anticipate Jesus' return? How is your Christian fellowship, service, and prayer impacted by the fact that He will one day return to earth? Spend ten minutes in Jesus' presence anticipating the day you will meet Him face to face.

Day 2

1. Explore what the ascension means for Jesus and the kingdom by filling in the blanks below.

Jesus is a permanent _____ (Heb 4:14-16).

Jesus is at God's _____ in the place of eternal authority (1 Pet 3:22).

Jesus is the promised _____ (Isa 9:7).

2. Discover the importance of the ascension for followers of Jesus by reading the following verses and filling in the missing words.

Followers of Jesus are now _____ of Christ to the world (Acts 1:8).

Jesus lives to make _____ for His people (Heb 7:25).

3. Out of the truths listed above, choose the top three that stand out the most to you in this season of life. Why?



Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Acts 2:42 below.

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ _____ and the fellowship, to the breaking _____ and the prayers.”



Prayer and Reflection

What emotions do you imagine Jesus feels in anticipation of His return to take you home? What emotions do you think Jesus feels when He sees your level of anticipation for Him? Have a heartfelt conversation with Him about this. Ask God to grow your anticipation of being with Him.

Day 3

Read Acts 2:1–13.

1. What were the disciples doing in Acts 1:13–15 leading up to when the Holy Spirit came?

2. What unusual sights and sounds were present as the Spirit came to fill them?

3. Thinking back over the stories of the Bible, what do these signs remind you of?

4. What did the disciples begin to do once the Spirit filled them?

5. How did the coming of the Holy Spirit continue the kingdom work Jesus initiated?

6. What does Ephesians 1:13–14 tell us about the Holy Spirit?

Going Deeper

Read John 15–17. Before His arrest, Jesus gave a final address to His disciples where He promised to send the “Helper,” the Holy Spirit, to dwell within them. The Spirit of God Himself lives inside of every believer! All believers are considered “in Christ” because of this mystery. Focus on chapters 15 and 17 as you answer the following questions.

- How did Jesus define eternal life (John 17:3)?
- How does being in Christ relate to abiding in Him?
- Illustrate 17:21–23 by drawing a diagram of what these verses say our relationship to the Trinity looks like.

 **Key Verse**

Fill in the blanks for Acts 2:42 below.

“And they _____ themselves to the _____’ teaching and the _____, to the breaking of bread and the _____.”

 **Prayer and Reflection**

In our church culture, salvation is often referred to as the moment we “invite Jesus into our heart.” In many ways this is exactly what is taking place when we repent: we trust in Christ’s payment on the cross for our sins and the Spirit permanently makes His home inside of us. Believers move from death to eternal life through a mysterious relationship. Yet this transformative moment is only the beginning.

John 17:3 says, “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” This “knowing” refers to an intimate acquaintance with the God of the universe. Throughout Scripture we see many people who seem to know God this way—conversationally, like a friend.

Because we cannot see Him, sometimes we forget that Jesus is a physical living human being! Yet He reigns with God the Father right now. He is jealous for a real-time relationship with you and offers you His Spirit that you might know Him.

As humans we understand what it means to relate to other humans, but we aren’t frequently taught how to relate to God. If we are to experience eternal life as God intended, we must practice relating to Jesus; we must know Him.

Create space in your day to generously invest in your relationship with God. It’s what you were made for. Spiritual practices like silence, solitude, and Scripture meditation tune our hearts and minds to God and His voice.

Corporate prayer, confession of sin, and intentionally loving one another assist in the practice of relating to God as we relate to one another in love.

Eternal life is found in the person of Jesus. Do you know Jesus as an ever-present intimate companion? If you desire to know Christ more in this way, turn to Him. He promises that if we seek Him with all our hearts, we will find Him (Jer 29:13).

God is drawing you to Him; at this moment, turn your heart's full attention to Him.

Day 4

Read Acts 2:14–47.

1. In chapter 2, to whom did Peter address his sermon in the following verses?

Verse 14

Verse 22

Verse 29

Verse 36

2. Peter used Scripture to explain what was happening among them. Why would Scripture have been important to this audience?

3. Like many sermons, in Acts 2:14–41, Peter reasoned from the Scriptures first and then followed with a call to action. What was the point of his sermon? What was he calling the crowd to do?

4. Read Acts 2:41. To what were these 3,000 souls added?

5. In Acts 2:42–47, describe the lifestyle of those indwelt by the Holy Spirit?



Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Acts 2:42 below.

“And they _____ themselves to the _____, _____ and the _____, to the _____ of bread and the _____.”



Prayer and Reflection

Do you experience the Spirit at work in, around, and through you? How would you describe your relationship with the Holy Spirit to someone? Talk with the Triune God and practice listening to what the Spirit might be prompting within you. Write your reflections below.

The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ. It proclaims that Jesus is the Son of God. As the Son of God, He came to earth, lived a sinless life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again on the third day. All of this accomplished something amazing—Jesus conquered death and offers eternal life to all who believe in Him. This message is the heart of Christian faith, emphasizing salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Key verses that outline the gospel include John 3:16, Romans 10:9, and 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Through the gospel, we are reconciled to God and granted the hope of eternal life.

Day 5

Reread Acts 2.

1. Reflect back on the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1–9 and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. How are these stories alike and how do they differ?

2. The death of Jesus and the coming of His Spirit ushered in the new covenant. In Jeremiah 31:31–34, God announced that He would one day replace the covenant previously given to and broken by His people. What specific covenant does this passage mention?

3. From Jeremiah 31:31–34 and Ezekiel 36:26–27, what does the Spirit enable believers to accomplish under the new covenant that they previously could not?

4. How does this truth impact your concept of what it means to follow Jesus?

5. The chart on the next page has some comparisons from Hebrews. Highlight the truths that stand out to you.

	Old Covenant	New Covenant
High Priest	Human (5:1), sinful (7:27)	Son of God (4:14), without sin (4:15)
Sacrifice	Blood of animals, had to be repeated, did not take away sin (10:11)	Jesus' blood, was once for all time (10:12), forgave our sin (10:10)
God's Presence	God's presence dwelt in the tabernacle, made by man (9:1)	God's word dwells within our hearts (10:16)
Communication	Through priests/prophets (1:1)	Through His Son (1:2)



Going Deeper

Looking back to the covenant God made with Abraham in Genesis 15 (Week 3 Day 3), explain how the coming of the Holy Spirit is a new promise that continues the same redemptive work initiated with Abraham.



Key Verse

Write Acts 2:42 from memory below.



Prayer and Reflection

Through the new covenant, God is redeeming humanity and accomplishing His kingdom purposes through His people to the ends of the earth. What is your contribution to this great mission? Ask God how He wants you to use your gifts to worship Him. Practice using your gifts intentionally in the Spirit this week and see if you can recognize the difference between serving in your own strength and the strength which God supplies (1 Pet 4:10–12).

The Church in God's Story

God originally set apart the people of Israel and made a covenant with them to restore His people and to accomplish His purposes of drawing a people to Himself to restore creation. It was through this covenant that Jesus entered in and restored His people. Now, the Holy Spirit is poured out on the people of God to bring the gospel to all nations, and it is a promised seal guaranteeing our eternal inheritance. We are now connected to God in a very intimate way as His very Spirit indwells us. We are joined together in Jesus to form one community with one Spirit and that is the church.

Wrap Up

Write out the key verse for each of the following sections:

Christ: Jesus Enters Our World

Christ: Jesus' Message

Christ: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem

Christ: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Christ: Jesus Is Raised from the Dead

Church: The Coming of the Spirit

In this week's study, what did you learn about God that was new to you?

Week Twenty One



Week 22



Where are we in the Great Story?

Church: In Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria

Key Players

Holy Spirit, Apostles, Peter, John, Stephen

Books of the Bible

Acts, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, Jude

Key Verse

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

—Acts 1:8

Group Ice Breaker

Share a time when you saw someone live out their faith in a powerful way.

Making Connections

In Acts 3–12, Jesus’ Great Commission began to unfold as the apostles, empowered by the Spirit after Pentecost, healed people and spread the message of Jesus in Jerusalem. Despite facing opposition from religious and political leaders, the mission thrived and the church fostered a spirit of generosity while adapting to new challenges. The martyrdom of Stephen sparked severe persecution, which scattered believers and remarkably served to advance God’s mission. Notably, Paul, once a persecutor, became a believer. Even though the primary audience of Acts was Jewish people, key figures like Philip and Peter reached Samaritans and Gentiles as well, while Paul and Barnabas established Antioch as a base for their expanded mission to the Gentiles.

Sadducees—prominent Jewish sect known for their influence in religious, political, and social matters. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, angels, or spirits. They were associated with priestly and aristocratic classes, including the high priests.

Cornerstone—significant metaphor that represents Jesus as the foundation stone of the Church and the faith. The cornerstone is the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation, and it determines the position of the entire structure. All other stones were added to the cornerstone to create the building.

Day 1

Read Acts 3–4.

1. Describe what happened at the temple. How did Peter use the healing to reveal the power of God?

2. As all the people ran to see the man who had been healed, Peter used the opportunity to confront them about how they had rejected Jesus. What did Peter say to them?

3. Why do you think the religious leaders were so threatened by Peter and John’s teaching about Jesus?

4. Despite the opposition, many who heard the message believed, and the number of believers grew. What does this tell us about the power of the gospel in the face of persecution?

5. 1 Peter 1:1–16 stresses the importance of living for God, focusing on His grace and holiness, and remaining obedient despite challenges. How does this relate to the boldness and actions of Peter and John?



Going Deeper

In 1 Peter 2:4–10, believers are described as living stones, part of the holy priesthood. How did this identity connect to the mission and purpose of the early church? What implications does this have for how we view our role in sharing the gospel and serving others?



Key Verse

Write Acts 1:8 below.



Prayer and Reflection

In 1 Peter 1:15, we are commanded to be holy. What areas of your life are you honoring the Lord with the way that you live? What areas of your life are you not reflecting God's holiness? Spend some time confessing before the Lord. Ask Him to help you reflect His holiness and to give you an eagerness to walk in obedience to serve and love those around you.

Pharisees—prominent Jewish sect known for their strict adherence to the Law of Moses and their emphasis on oral traditions. They did believe in the resurrection of the dead, the existence of angels, and spirits. They were more representative of the common people.

Theudas—a false prophet.

Judas the Galilean—Zealot who advocated for Jewish independence and resistance against Roman rule.

Hellenists—Jews who lived outside of Judea, particularly in the Greco-Roman world, and often spoke Greek rather than Hebrew.

Day 2

Read Acts 5:12–6:7.

1. What motivated the high priest and the Sadducees to arrest the apostles (5:17)?

2. During the night, an angel of the Lord opened the doors to bring the apostles out of prison, and instructed them to continue to speak the words of life. In 5:27–28, they were questioned about their teaching. What does the apostles' response demonstrate to us and what can we learn from their example?

3. What does 5:34–40 say about human origin versus God's plans?

4. Describe what happened in Acts 6:1–7. What does this reveal about the importance of addressing practical needs within the church community?

5. In Acts 6:7, the word of God spread and the number of disciples increased. It was important as the gospel went out, that new believers had instruction on how to live. Jesus tells believers how to live in Matthew 5-7. What are some things that stand out to you?

Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Acts 1:8 below.

“But you will _____ when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my _____ in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Prayer and Reflection

How do the events in today’s reading inspire you to be more bold in your faith? Spend some time asking God what specific areas of your life He is calling you to step out in boldness, faith, and obedience. Praise God that He gives us boldness as we step into His purposes in our lives!

Day 3

Read Acts 6:8–7:60.

1. Why do you think Stephen provided a historical account to an audience that was likely already familiar with the information?

2. Write the definition of “stiff-necked.” How can this attitude manifest in our relationship with God and others? What problems would that present for us today?

3. How can we be aware of and guard against resisting the Holy Spirit in our own lives?

4. Why would Stephen’s speech make the religious leaders mad?

5. In the face of persecution, what vision does Stephen see? What significance would this hold for Stephen and the early church?



Going Deeper

Read Hebrews 11. How did Stephen's bold proclamation and ultimate martyrdom in Acts reflect the same kind of faith described in Hebrews? In what ways can we draw inspiration from both Stephen's example and the examples of faith in Hebrews to strengthen our own faith?



Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Acts 1:8 below.

“But you will receive power when the _____ has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in _____ and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”



Prayer and Reflection:

Read or listen to Acts 7 out loud. What areas in your life do you feel hesitant to speak out for Christ? Think of one person that you can share the gospel with this week. Ask God to help you stand firm in your faith and to give you the strength to share the gospel.

“The Way” refers to the early followers of Jesus Christ and their teachings, representing the path of faith and discipleship in following Him.

Day 4

Read Acts 8–9.

1. Fill in the chart:

	Simon the Magician	Ethiopian Eunuch
What were their backgrounds?		
What were their motivations for seeking faith and understanding?		
How did their request for understanding differ?		
How did each respond to the message of the gospel?		
What, if any, evidence was there of genuine transformation and repentance?		

In Acts 8:1–3 and 9:1–2, Saul (later known as Paul) actively persecuted the early church, imprisoned believers, and sought to destroy the movement. In the rest of Acts 9, he had a dramatic conversion.

2. What actions did Saul take right after his conversion, and what challenges did he encounter?

 **Key Verse**

Fill in the blanks for Acts 1:8 below.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in _____ and in all _____ and _____, and to the _____.”

 **Prayer and Reflection**

How has your faith journey been unique? Did it begin with a sudden change or has it been marked by slower growth? Spend time praising God for His incredible grace and love in calling you out of sin and into His family!

The word “Christian” originated in Antioch, where followers of Jesus were first called Christians (Acts 11:26), reflecting their commitment to emulate Christ in their thoughts, actions, and character.

Day 5

Read Acts 10–12.

1. Describe Peter’s vision. How did this vision challenge Peter’s understanding of clean and unclean, and what did it reveal about God’s plan for the Gentiles?

2. In Peter’s message to Cornelius and his household, what key elements of the gospel did he emphasize?

3. How did the Jewish believers initially react to Peter preaching to the Gentiles? How did Peter defend his actions to them?

4. In Acts 12, Peter was arrested. What happened the night before Peter was to be brought to trial?

5. Several miraculous things happen to protect Peter and the gospel (Peter's miraculous rescue from prison, Herod's death). How do you think these events affected the early church's perception of God's power, protection, and mission?



Going Deeper

Why do you think Herod chose to execute the guards instead of investigating how Peter escaped?



Key Verse

Write Acts 1:8 from memory below.



Prayer and Reflection

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

—Jude 1:24-25

God moved powerfully through the early church’s devotion to earnest prayer. How can you deepen your prayer life and intercede for those who are seeking Him? What is God calling you to pray for today?

The Church in God’s Story

God’s active presence is evident through miracles, like the healing of the lame man in Acts 3 and the revival of Tabitha in Acts 9, showcasing His compassion and transformative power. The boldness of apostles like Peter and John reflects the Holy Spirit’s empowerment in Acts 4:31.

God’s sovereignty shines in Acts 12 when He frees Peter from prison and in Acts 10 when He gives Peter a vision that unites Jews and Gentiles. Saul’s conversion to Paul in Acts 9 further illustrates God’s ability to change hearts. Together, these passages reveal His commitment to spreading the gospel through the early church.

Wrap Up

Write out the key verse for each of the following sections:

Christ: Jesus Enters Our World

Christ: Jesus' Message

Christ: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem

Christ: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Christ: Jesus Is Raised from the Dead

Church: The Coming of the Spirit

Church: In Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria

In this week's study, what did you learn about God that was new to you?



Week 23



Where are we in the Great Story?

Church: The Mission to the Gentiles

Key Players

Holy Spirit, Peter, and Paul

Books of the Bible

Acts, Romans, Galatians, 1 Thessalonians, and 2 Corinthians

Key Verse

“For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...”

—Romans 3:22b-24

Group Ice Breaker

If you could have any person as a mentor for a day, who would it be and why?

Making Connections

In Acts 12-21, the church took on the mission of carrying the good news of Jesus full throttle to the ends of the earth. From Antioch, a sending church, the Spirit launched missionary tours across the Greco-Roman world using Paul, Barnabas, and others.

Saul to Paul (Acts 13:9)—Saul was his Hebrew name, while Paul was his Gentile name. The name change symbolizes a shift in the narrative of Acts to focus on the Gentiles.

Day 1

Read Acts 13:1–15:35.

Barnabas and Saul were sent out by the Holy Spirit after a time of fasting and praying to proclaim Jesus.

Paul's First Missionary Journey

Acts 13–14



Adapted from Logos Bible Software, Copyright 2007

1. Summarize Paul's sermon in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch (beginning in 13:14). What was the response of both the Jews and Gentiles?

2. The healing of the crippled man in Lystra served as a catalyst for the crowd's reaction. How did the people misunderstand Paul and Barnabas and what was Paul and Barnabas's response?

3. The Jerusalem Council met to determine if Gentile believers should follow Jewish laws, particularly circumcision. During his speech, Peter reminded the counsel that God had made no distinction between Jewish and Gentile believers and urged them not to add a yoke that they themselves were unable to bear. What was the final decision?

Read Romans 3 and Galatians 5:1–15.

Although he appointed local leaders, Paul served as their apostolic father in the faith from a distance through his letters.

4. What does Paul emphasize in Romans 3 and Galatians 5? What warning is given?



Key Verse

Write Romans 3:22b–24 below.



Prayer and Reflection

Take a moment to examine your heart before God and ask Him to show you any places where you are prioritizing religion over a relationship with Him. Ask Him to change your heart and grow your desire for intimacy with Him over any ritual or tradition.

Paul circumcised Timothy not as a requirement for salvation, but as a strategic decision to enhance their ministry effectiveness and to respect cultural sensitivities. This action reflected Paul's commitment to spreading the gospel while navigating the complexities of cultural and religious practices.

In Acts 16, the narrative shifts from using third-person language to first-person plural (“we”) starting in verse ten. This change indicates that the author of Acts, traditionally understood to be Luke, the physician and companion of Paul, likely joined the missionary journey.

Macedonia was the first place the gospel spread to in the continent of Europe. It was located in the northern part of Greece, bordered by the Aegean Sea to the east. It included important cities such as Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea.

The Areopagus was also known as Mars Hill. It was a prominent rock formation located in Greece, and served as a council and a court for the city of Athens. It was also a place where philosophical discussions and debates took place.

Day 2

Read Acts 15:36–17:34.

1. What events led Paul and Silas to leave on Paul's second missionary journey?

2. Paul received a vision of a man from Macedonia urging him to come and help them. How did this vision change the course of their mission?

3. Paul's approach when he spoke at the Areopagus in Athens highlights the importance of contextualizing the gospel when witnessing to another culture. Why was repentance a crucial aspect of Paul's message?

4. What caused the arrest of Paul and Silas, and what occurred while they were in jail?

1 Thessalonians is a letter written by Paul to the church in Thessalonica, which he established during this journey. It encourages the believers in their faith and addresses concerns about the return of Christ.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.

5. What did Paul urge the Thessalonian believers to do in this passage? What did he warn against?



Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Romans 3:22b-24 below.

“For there is no _____: for all have _____ and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...”



Prayer and Reflection

We are called to lead a quiet life and work with our hands. Reflect on the value of diligence and responsibility in your daily life. Ask the Lord to cultivate contentment and purpose in your work.

Paul cut his hair at Cenchreae as a fulfillment of a vow he had taken. This vow is often understood to be a Nazirite vow, which is a commitment described in Numbers 6:1–21, where individuals would abstain from certain things, including cutting their hair, for a specified period as a sign of dedication to God.

Antioch was Paul's home base for missionary work. It was located in what is now southern Turkey, near the modern city of Antakya.

Philip the Evangelist was one of the seven deacons appointed in the early church (Acts 6:1–6).

Day 3

Read Acts 18–19.

- 1. How did God respond to Paul after the challenge he faced in the synagogue?**

- 2. How did Paul disciple the Ephesians who hadn't yet heard of the Holy Spirit? What is the importance of discipleship and mentorship among believers?**

- 3. The evil spirits recognized Jesus and Paul, but not the Jewish exorcists. What does this signify about Jesus' authority?**

- 4. Why were Demetrius and the other craftsmen of the temple of Artemis so enraged by Paul and his companions?**

Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Romans 3:22b–24 below.

“For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are _____ by his _____ as a gift, through the _____ that is in Christ Jesus...”

Prayer and Reflection

Aquila and Priscilla played a crucial role in instructing Apollos. What additional things does this teach us about the importance of mentorship and discipleship in the church? How can you be more intentional in mentoring others?

Would you like to mentor or be mentored? Please scan the QR code.



Paul's decision to go to Jerusalem, despite the warnings, reflects his commitment to his mission, his understanding of suffering, and his personal conviction. He viewed his journey as an essential part of his calling to spread the gospel, even in the face of danger.

Day 4

Read Acts 20:1–21:36.

1. What key themes did Paul emphasize in his farewell address to the elders of Ephesus?

Acts 20:17-21

Acts 20:22-24

Acts 20:25–27

Acts 20:28–31

Acts 20:32–35

2. Despite the other disciples' warnings, why was Paul determined to go to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4, 11–14)?

3. What were the concerns of the Jewish elders and how does Paul address the concerns (Acts 21:17–26)?



Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Romans 3:22b–24 below.

“For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and _____ of the _____ of God, and are justified by his grace as a _____, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...”



Prayer and Reflection

Paul’s work with the Gentiles and Jewish people shows us the importance of living in community with fellow believers. How engaged are you in community? How can you encourage and support others in their walk with Christ? Ask the Lord to bring someone to your mind, pray for them and ask how you can encourage them today.

Day 5

2 Corinthians is a letter written by Paul to the church in Corinth. This letter serves as a defense of Paul's apostleship and discusses themes of suffering, comfort, and reconciliation.

Read 2 Corinthians 3-5.

Through these three chapters, Paul addressed that the day of salvation was upon them, and they were called to live like it. As people with hope, they were called to be bold and to reflect God's glory as a new creation. They were called to be Christ's ambassadors to implore people to be reconciled to God, continuing in the mission God laid out in Acts.

1. What does it mean to be a "letter" written by the Spirit?

2. How can our lives serve as a testimony to others?

3. How are we to find hope and strength in the midst of suffering?

4. What does it mean in your current season of life to be an ambassador for Christ?

5. How does the future reality of standing before God influence the way we live our lives?

 **Going Deeper**

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 shares the powerful message about transformation and reconciliation through faith in Christ. Practice sharing the gospel with a partner or write it out below.

 **Key Verse**

Write Romans 3:22b–24 from memory below.

 **Prayer and Reflection**

Sanctification is the process of being made holy and set apart for God’s purposes through the Holy Spirit, starting at salvation and continuing throughout a believer’s life. How has God changed your desires and actions to make you more like Jesus? How have you seen Him use you for His purposes?

The Church in God’s Story

God is actively working through the early church (people like you and me!) to spread the gospel. He calls and sends Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey, reflecting His desire for salvation to reach the Gentiles. God performs miracles, guides the apostles through the Holy Spirit, and demonstrates His faithfulness as Paul and others endure persecution. God’s sovereignty, love, and commitment to fulfilling His promises through the church are highlighted.

Wrap Up

Write out the key verse for each of the following sections:

Christ: Jesus Enters Our World

Christ: Jesus' Message

Christ: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem

Christ: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Christ: Jesus Is Raised from the Dead

Church: The Coming of the Spirit

Church: In Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria

Church: The Mission to the Gentiles

In this week's study, what did you learn about God that was new to you?



Week 24



Where are we in the Great Story?

Church: The Gospel Spreads from Jerusalem to Rome

Key Players

Paul

Books of the Bible

Acts, Ephesians, Philippians, Philemon, 2 Timothy

Key Verse

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

—Ephesians 2:8–10

Group Ice Breaker

Have you ever been caught in a storm?

Making Connections

The gospel continued to spread to the Gentiles. With Jesus at the center, the priority was unity, serving the body, and reaching the lost. On his journey, Paul endured very real suffering and hardship, yet he still walked in obedience to the call to make disciples.

Paul was put on trial and imprisoned for his belief in Jesus’ resurrection. During his lengthy incarceration in various places across the Roman world, Paul had opportunities to bear witness about Jesus to many influential people. It was in a Roman home, awaiting trial, and guarded by a soldier, that Paul proclaimed “the kingdom of God and [taught] about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (Acts 28:31).

Day 1

In Acts 20, Paul called together the elders of the church and bid them farewell. Then he left for Jerusalem and eventually Rome.

In the beginning of Acts 21, Paul set sail for Jerusalem. On the way, he stopped and spent time with other disciples who warned him against continuing on, but Paul said he was ready to be imprisoned and even to die for the name of Jesus.

Read Acts 21:17–22:30.

1. When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he shared the things God had done among the Gentiles and then purified himself. How might this have encouraged the people and Paul?

2. Paul was accused and arrested in Acts 21:27–36. Why do you think Paul responded the way that he did in Acts 22:1–21?

3. How did the people’s reaction show the condition of their hearts in Acts 22:22–29?

Read Ephesians 1-2.

Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon are known as Paul's prison letters because he wrote them while he was in prison. Paul wrote the letter of Ephesians to the church in Ephesus to remind them that Jesus had reconciled all things to Himself and had united Jews and Gentiles to Himself as one body. Paul then instructed followers of Jesus how to live in light of being made new in Christ.

The church of Ephesus was an important part of Paul's ministry. Paul traveled to Ephesus on his third missionary journey. He taught them about the Holy Spirit, which they received after being baptized. Paul remained there for two years preaching so that all the residents heard the gospel. God performed many miracles through Paul in Ephesus. The city was known for its large temple to the Greek goddess Artemis. Eventually a large riot arose from artisans of Artemis' temple whose livelihood was threatened by Paul's ministry.

4. List all of the ways Paul encouraged believers in Ephesians 1.

5. How should the truth of Ephesians 2:1-10 impact how believers live?

Paul refers to the church as the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Paul explains that just as a body is one unit made up of many parts, so it is with the church. Each believer is like a different part of the body, uniquely gifted and essential for the functioning of the whole. Ephesians 4:15-16 says that the church grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work. Christ is the head of the body and directs the church in fulfilling God's purposes on earth.

Read here for more information on the history of the city of Ephesus.





Going Deeper

Why would it be helpful for the Ephesian church to remember that they were Gentiles by birth? How would remembering that help frame the truth of Ephesians 2:13-22?



Key Verse

Write Ephesians 2:8-10 below.



Prayer and Reflection

In Ephesians 1:3-14, we are told that God has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. There is often confusion around God promising us worldly blessings, but Paul tells us here that God promises us spiritual blessings in Christ. He even at one point talks about his trials/suffering as spiritual blessings. Take some time to write down the specific ways God has blessed you spiritually, using Ephesians 1:3-14 as your guide. As you do this exercise, consider ways you may need to repent of how you have taken these blessings for granted, instead of having your heart stirred by gratitude toward the Lord.

Day 2

Read Acts 23:1-11, 24:1-27.

1. In Acts 23:1-11, how did Paul defend himself and what was the result?

2. In Acts 24, how was God glorified through Paul's response to the charges?



Going Deeper

How was Paul's ministry a success even though he was kept in prison?

Read Ephesians 3-4.

3. What was the mystery God revealed to Paul?

4. What was God’s purpose for Paul related to this mystery? How did God use Paul in Acts 23–24 to accomplish that purpose?

5. List several ways Paul encouraged the Ephesians to resemble Christ.

Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Ephesians 2:8–10 below.

“For by _____ you have been _____ through faith. And this is not your _____; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Prayer and Reflection

Think of a time when you obeyed God, but did not receive the desired outcome. How was He good and faithful even if the outcome was not what you desired? Spend time confessing any areas where you let your worldly desires rule over your desires for God’s plans. Then ask Him to line up your desires to be kingdom desires.

Day 3

In Acts 25, officials conferred about how to proceed with the imprisoned Paul who had been moved from Jerusalem to Caesarea. Plotting against him, they tried to have Paul brought back to Jerusalem to face his accusers, but Paul held firm that he wanted to be tried before Caesar's tribunal in Rome instead. Paul's case was then presented to Agrippa the king.

Read Acts 26.

1. How did God further His kingdom plans in Acts 26?

The church at Philippi was the first church Paul helped found in Europe (Acts 16:6–40). He wrote to them while in prison and encouraged them to press on in their faith and thanked them for their support.

Read Philippians 2:1–18, 3:1–21.

2. How did Paul encourage the church to have the same humility as Jesus? Why is this important at this point in the story?

3. In 2:12–18 Paul calls the people of God to be a light. How was Paul a light in Acts 26?

King Agrippa was the great-grandson of Herod the Great (the Herod of Jesus' birth story in Matthew). He ruled over several minor, mostly Gentile, territories. Bernice was his sister. Agrippa had a reputation as a pious Jew with extensive knowledge of Jewish beliefs, which may be why Paul gives the most detailed exposition of the gospel to him.

4. In 3:3–11, why did Paul tell the church not to put confidence in their flesh?

5. In 3:12–21, how did Paul exhort the church to press on?

Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Ephesians 2:8–10 below.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And _____
_____ your own doing; it is the _____ of God,
not a result of _____, so that no one may _____. For we
are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God
prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Prayer and Reflection

In Philippians 3:7–11, Paul says he considers everything a loss compared to knowing Jesus. What things do you put your confidence in apart from the Lord? Spend some time confessing what you are holding on to instead of surrendering to the Lord. Praise God that knowing Him is worth losing everything else. Ask Him to build up your desire for Him as the ultimate reward.

Day 4

From prison, Paul continued to be a faithful witness of Jesus. As a Roman citizen, he had the right to appeal his case directly to Caesar; therefore, he was taken to Rome for his case to be heard. He set sail with almost three hundred other men for what would become a perilous journey.

Read Acts 27–28.

1. List several hardships Paul and his fellow travelers endured during their journey to Rome.

2. According to Acts 27:21–26, why did Paul become confident that they would all arrive safely to their destination despite his earlier warnings?

3. List several times Paul and his fellow travelers received kindness along the way.

Throughout the book of Acts (and indeed the whole Story of God) we see the sovereign hand of God at work accomplishing His purposes. Follow this QR code to read an article by John Piper about God's sovereignty.





Going Deeper

John 14:12–17 (printed below) records some of Jesus’ last words to his disciple before He was arrested. How do you see Jesus’ words being fulfilled through Paul?

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

–John 14:12–17

4. In Acts 9:15–16, God declared His purpose for Paul when He said to Ananias, “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” How did God’s plan for Paul continue in Rome (Acts 28:17–31)?

The book of Philemon is a short letter that addressed one of the many unique challenges new believers faced as the gospel spread to all different types of people. Paul wrote to Philemon (a Gentile slave owner who had become a follower of Jesus) on behalf of Onesimus (a runaway slave who had also become a follower of Jesus).

Read Philemon.

5. What did Paul ask Philemon to do for Onesimus? Why?

Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Ephesians 2:8–10 below.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his _____, created in Christ Jesus for _____, which God _____ beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Prayer and Reflection

How have you experienced God’s kindness to you during hardship? Thank Him for the people who have encouraged you to trust Him through difficult circumstances and relationships. If you are currently in an arduous season, ask God to give you eyes to see His kindness even now. Look for an opportunity to encourage someone else today.

“Paul has finally made it to Rome, but not as he expected. He arrives as a prisoner rather than a free traveler. He has suffered greatly for the cause of Christ, but he remains a faithful witness in spite of his chains. Yet while Paul is bound, the gospel is free and goes out to all who will listen. It’s fitting that the last word of the book (‘without hindrance’ is one word in Greek) describes the liberating influence of the gospel and fulfills Jesus’ words in Acts 1:8 that the good news will go to the ends of the earth.”

—Duvall and Hays, 281.

Day 5

Throughout his journeys, Paul continued to encourage the church by writing letters. The books of 1st and 2nd Timothy, along with Titus, are known as Paul's pastoral letters. He wrote them from a second imprisonment in Rome, knowing that he would most likely be martyred soon. They were addressed to Timothy, the pastor in Ephesus whom he had first met in Acts 16:1-3, and to Titus, who shepherded the church on the island of Crete.

If you have ever received a letter from someone you hold in high regard, you can imagine how eager they must have been to read them. They would've been cherished, repeatedly read from beginning to end, and shared with others. We should read them in a similar fashion.

Paul's Three Missionary Journeys

Acts 19-20



Adapted from Logos Bible Software, Copyright 2007

Read 2 Timothy.

1. Considering the way Paul opened and closed the letter, how would you describe how he felt about Timothy? (2 Tim 1:1-7, 4:9-22)

2. As Paul's death drew near, what did he want Timothy to know about how he had suffered for the gospel? (2 Tim 1:8-12, 2:8-13, 4:6-8, 17-18)

3. The Greek word for church is *ekklesia* which means "called out ones." When the New Testament speaks of the church, it is referring to a group of people united in Christ, not the building where they meet. What types of challenges did Paul say the church faced then and would face in the future? (2 Tim 2:14-3:9, 4:3-4)

“The book of Acts closes with Paul awaiting his audience with the emperor. Early church tradition says that Paul was eventually released from his first Roman imprisonment (AD 60–62) and that he continued his missionary ministry for a while before being rearrested, imprisoned in Rome a second time, and eventually martyred in about AD 67–68. Sometime between AD 63 and 67, Paul wrote to his two trusted coworkers with encouragement and advice about church ministry.”

–Duvall and Hayes, 281.

4. In the verses above, Paul also confronted some of the attitudes and actions of individuals that would have a negative impact on the overall health of the church. As one of the “called out ones,” which of the sins described challenge you to repent?

5. Throughout the letter, Paul exhorted Timothy to lead the church of Ephesus well. Summarize some of his remarks that inspire and encourage you.



Going Deeper

Jesus used the mustard seed as an analogy in Matthew 17:20b, “For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.”

What are some of the seemingly impossible things that God did through the faith of the church in Acts?



Key Verse

Write Ephesians 2:8–10 from memory below.



Prayer and Reflection

Spend time thanking God for the church, the body of believers united in Christ. Ask God to show you any ways you may have been more focused on yourself than your community. Ask Him how He wants to use you to contribute to its health through your attitudes and conduct. Pray for the challenges the church faces today. Consider sending a note of encouragement to a leader in the church this week.

The Church in God's Story

Jesus predicted that the kingdom would start off small and would grow across the world. His word was fulfilled as the gospel spread throughout Paul's imprisonment and Paul's letters. The message of Jesus' resurrection was at the heart of Paul's ministry and is ultimately what many Jews rejected. At the same time, the number of believing Gentiles grew. God used Gentile Christians to share the gospel even among Jewish people. God's covenant with Abraham, that he would be a father to many nations (Gen 17:5–6), was being fulfilled as the gospel spread to Gentile Christians and the kingdom of God grew throughout the world.

God's redemptive purposes through Jesus could not be thwarted. God used Paul's imprisonment and trial to further share the gospel to new

places and people in authority. In the Old Testament, God used Joseph's suffering in similar ways to save His people. "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today" (Gen 50:20). The same is true of Paul from this section.

Wrap Up

Write out the key verse for each of the following sections:

Christ: Jesus Enters Our World

Christ: Jesus' Message

Christ: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem

Christ: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Christ: Jesus Is Raised from the Dead

Church: The Coming of the Spirit

Church: In Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria

Church: The Mission to the Gentiles

Church: The Gospel Spreads from Jerusalem to Rome

In this week's study, what did you learn about God that was new to you?



Week 25



Where are we in the Great Story?

Consummation, Part One

Key Players

John, God, Jesus, Angels

Book of the Bible

Revelation

Key Verse

“Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.”

—Revelation 1:3

Group Ice Breaker

Have you ever had the ending of a movie or book spoiled for you before experiencing it? Did it make you excited to see or read it, or did it diminish your interest?

Making Connections

God’s Story began when He created the heavens and the earth, and it was “good”; not just good but perfect. But the people He created soon disobeyed Him, thereby breaking God’s perfect creation. God, however, was not caught unawares and had a plan to restore it. The rest of the Old Testament portion of the Story continued to point to that plan, and in Weeks 16–20 His plan was finally revealed—Jesus! Even then, Jesus’ death and resurrection merely instituted the restoration plan; the plan is now in progress, but not complete.

In the first part of Revelation, we see Jesus as how both the Old Testament (lion, lamb) and the New Testament (firstborn of all creation) described Him, with a message for all who follow Him.

Consummation—the point at which something is completed or fulfilled.

Day 1

Read Revelation 1:1–6.

Revelation is one of the most discussed books in the Bible. In spite of that (or perhaps because of it), it's also one of the most misunderstood. Its fantastical visions capture the imagination, but making sense of them has challenged the church for almost two thousand years. Much of the challenge is that Revelation contains multiple genres of writing, and each of them impacts how what John has written should be read.

1. In the very first phrase of 1:1, how did John describe what he wrote?

Here is where the book gets its name. “Revelation” is a translation of the Greek word *apokalypsis*, and it is that word which provides the indication of the first genre. Apocalyptic writing was popular in the time between the testaments (Week 15), and generally contained wildly imaginative symbolic scenes of the end times, among other things.

2. In verse three, how did John describe what he wrote? What three things did he say his audience should do with what he wrote?

The second genre is something we're more familiar with (Weeks 12–14). Old Testament prophecy was meant to provoke changed behavior in the recipients. The same is true here—in order for John's audience to keep the prophecy, there must be something for them to do as a result of reading it.

3. What does verse four sound like? Compare Galatians 1:2b-3, Ephesians 1:1-2, James 1:1-2, etc.

The third genre is the most familiar one. Most letters in the Bible are written to a particular church about particular situations, e.g. 1 Corinthians, Galatians. But John tells us this letter is different.

4. Who did John say the letter was to?

By describing it as a single letter to multiple churches, John tells us the overall message is applicable to all of them, even though it may have portions that are specific to each of them (see Day 3). The seven churches were actual churches that ran roughly in a semicircle from Patmos where John was exiled. But by naming seven of them, John was also implicitly saying that the message of the letter was (and is!) for all churches.

Numbers have significance in Revelation.

Seven—completeness, e.g. seven eyes is all-seeing.

Four—the wholeness of the earth, e.g. its four corners, directions, etc.

Twelve—the people of God, cf. the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve apostles.

The Seven Churches of Revelation



5. In verse two, what did John say he'd done in sharing the revelation given to him?

The words “witness” and “testimony” are different forms of the same Greek word. Being a witness of Jesus’ testimony, i.e. what He said and did, is a crucial part of John’s message to the church.

With that background, before diving into the details of this mysterious book, the consummation of God’s Story, let’s begin by reading (or listening to) it. Reading it will take about an hour; try to set aside an hour and do it all in one sitting if at all possible. (If not, read chapters 1–11 in one session, then 12–21.)

Don't try to figure out who the beast is; don't try to settle the debate on the millennial reign; don't stress about the numbers, just read it!

Key Verse

Write Revelation 1:3 below.

Prayer and Reflection

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you begin this study of Revelation. Thank Him for giving us the certainty of His ultimate victory, and ask Him to show you how you can “keep what is written in it.”

Day 2

Read Revelation 1.

1. What is the sequence of revelation described in verse one? That is, with whom did the message begin, and to whom did it go from there?

› › › › The Reader

2. In John's salutation in verses four and the first part of five, who did he say his greeting is from?

-
-
-
-

3. In verses twelve to sixteen, how did John describe the one who speaks to him on Patmos?

Revelation contains more allusions and references to the Old Testament than any other book in the Bible; in describing the consummation of the Story, John uses all of the Story until now. Here, John wants us to have in mind the scene in Daniel 7:9-14.

4. In verses seventeen and eighteen, how did the one John saw describe himself?

In a rarity in Revelation, two of the symbols are explained to John in verse twenty.

5. What are the seven stars?

6. What are the seven lampstands?

The stage is set. We know the author, the messengers, and the recipients. We are ready for the message itself.

Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Revelation 1:3 below.

“_____ is the one who reads aloud the words of this _____,
and _____ are those who _____, and who _____ what
is written in it, for the time is near.”

Prayer and Reflection

Meditate on each of the descriptions of Jesus in verses 12–18. Which one is most impactful to you? Why? Spend some time thanking the Lord for everything that Jesus is to us.

At the time of the writing of Revelation (circa AD 95, according to most scholars), the Roman empire was not only the predominant political entity, the worship of the emperor was the predominant religious entity. Thus, politics and (false) religion were united under the banner of the empire, and “Caesar is Lord” was the standard confession. The Christian confession of “Jesus is Lord” thus ran headlong into opposition in every arena: politics, social interaction, and religion.

Day 3

Read Revelation 2-3.

The revelation begins with messages (not letters, since Revelation is a single letter to all of them) to each of the seven churches mentioned in chapter 1. Each of the messages is specific to the church to whom it is written, but they have several factors in common. Fill in the rest of the chart with the appropriate pieces from each message.

	Jesus' Description	Commendation (if any)	Failings (if any) Needed Correction	“The one who conquers...”
Ephesus	Holds the seven stars in His right hand, walks among the seven golden lampstands	Works, toil, patient endurance, cannot bear evil, tested apostles, not grown weary.	Lost your first love. Repent and do the works you did at first; if not, I will remove your lampstand (church).	I will grant to eat of the tree of life (paradise of God).
Smyrna				
Pergamum				

Thyatira				
Sardis				
Philadelphia				
Laodicea				

1. What did the churches' failings have in common?

2. Why do you think "the one who conquers" and what they would receive was included in each church's message?

Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Revelation 1:3 below.

"Blessed is _____ who reads aloud the _____ of _____ prophecy, and blessed are _____ hear, and who keep _____ is _____ in it, for the _____ is near."

Prayer and Reflection

As you read through the messages, which of the commendations do you feel are the most applicable to your life right now? Thank the Lord for His grace in that encouragement. Which of the failings do you most identify with? Ask the Lord to help you to take the needed correction, to follow Him uncompromisingly.

Day 4

Read Revelation 4.

With the messages to the seven churches now over, the scene immediately shifts. As he will throughout Revelation, John alludes to previous portions of God's Story. This time he has Ezekiel 1-3 and Isaiah 6 in mind when he describes the scene.

1. Where did this scene take place?

2. Who was present around the throne and how are they described?

3. What were they doing in verses eight through eleven?

Read Revelation 5.

In 5:1, a scroll with seven seals appears.

4. It initially seemed that no one was worthy to open the scroll. In verse five, what did John hear to describe the one who could open it?

5. In verse six, what did John see?

Notice the difference between what John hears and what John sees, even though both refer to the same thing; this will occur multiple times throughout Revelation.

In verses eight through fourteen, the lamb/lion (Jesus) was worshiped in the same way God was worshiped in chapter four.

6. In verses nine and ten, why did they say He was worthy?

Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Revelation 1:3 below.

“ _____ is the one who _____ the words of _____, and blessed _____ who hear, and _____ what is written _____, for the time _____.”

Prayer and Reflection

Spend some time in worship of God and Jesus. Listen to a favorite worship song (e.g. “Revelation Song”). Write down some reasons He is worthy, and Jesus is worthy, to receive that worship. Celebrate the gift of life in Him that allows you to be one who offers Him that worship.

Day 5

Read Revelation 6–7.

The scene shifts again, and the devastating visions of the revelation begin in earnest through a series of sevens: seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls; each time with an interlude before the seventh of the series.

But in the midst of the opening of the seals, there is another surprise.

1. After the fifth seal was opened in 6:9, who did John see? What caused them to be there?

2. What question did they have for the Lord, and what answer did they receive?

In the first of the interludes, the focus stays on seals, but of a different purpose.

3. In 7:4–8, what did John hear? In verse nine, what did he see? Who were these people (7:13–17)?

(As in the previous instance, it is reasonable to conclude that what John heard and what he saw were two sides of the same coin.)

In both of these visions, the focus is on witness. As the fifth seal reveals, the potential cost of being a witness is great, but it is no greater than the cost to Jesus (Rev 1:2). And, as the interlude reveals, those who have paid that price are irrevocably God's (sealed as His), and serve God "day and night" in their victory.

4. How do these visions of witnesses encourage and challenge you as you reflect on being Jesus' witness in today's world?



Key Verse

Write Revelation 1:3 from memory below.



Prayer and Reflection

Pray and ask the Lord to give you an expanded vision of your calling as a witness, and the courage and perseverance to be obedient to that calling. Praise Him for allowing you to be a part of His work to bring people into His kingdom.

The Consummation of God's Story

All of the Old Testament pointed to Jesus as being God's plan for restoring all creation, including humanity, to its original state (Gen 1-2). The New Testament shows Him to be not only God's plan, but God's Son, preexistent with God. The first part of Revelation affirms both, showing Him worshiped in Heaven just as God is, and in charge of all creation, including having "the keys of Death and Hades."

Wrap Up

Write out the key verse for each of the following sections:

Christ: Jesus Enters Our World

Christ: Jesus' Message

Christ: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem

Christ: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Christ: Jesus is Raised from the Dead

Church: The Coming of the Spirit

Church: In Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria

Church: The Mission to the Gentiles

Church: The Gospel Spreads from Jerusalem to Rome

Consummation, Part One

In this week's study, what did you learn about God that was new to you?



Week 26



Where are we in the Great Story?

Consummation

Key Players

John, God, Jesus, Angels

Book of the Bible

Revelation

Key Verse

“And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.”

—Revelation 12:11

Group Ice Breaker

If you could ask one question about the future, what would it be and why?

Making Connections

In the last part of Revelation, we see those who stand against God’s plan for restoration, their demise, and God’s plan now finally fulfilled as Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah, and others envisioned it: the new heaven and the new earth, made clean and illuminated by the light of the Lamb, Jesus.

Day 1

Read Revelation 8–11.

1. In the first, second, third, fourth, and sixth trumpets, what percentage of the judgment’s target was affected?



Going Deeper

Read Exodus 7:14–10:29 and make a list of all the plagues. Compare the list to the results of the first five trumpets in Revelation 8:6–9:12. What similarities do you see?

2. According to 9:20, what was the result of the first six trumpet judgments? What does that imply the purpose of the judgments were?

In the second interlude, a second “mighty angel” brought the scroll last seen in chapter five to John. In yet another Old Testament allusion (Eze 3:1–15), John was told to eat the scroll, and afterward that he must again prophesy. What followed in chapter eleven would then appear to be the message of the scroll.

3. In 11:3, who was granted authority, and for how long?

4. In verse seven, what happened to them? And what happened to them in verses eleven and twelve?

5. In the second part of verse thirteen and verse fifteen, what was the end result of their ministry?

The goal since the beginning of the Story (cf. Matt 6:10) God has now brought about, through the testimony of the two witnesses. And just as Israel sang a song of thanksgiving after their deliverance from Egypt at the Red Sea (Exod 15), so the twenty-four elders sang a song of praise here in 11:17-18.



Key Verse

Write Revelation 12:11 below.



Prayer and Reflection

Spend a few minutes reflecting on the example of the two witnesses. Pray and ask the Lord to give you their courage.

Day 2

Read Revelation 16–18.

After another interlude, John resets the story. He introduces the Dragon, the beast from the sea, the beast from the earth, and the mark of the beast. John proclaims doom for everyone who takes the mark of the beast. The series of seven judgments ends with the seven bowls.

1. How were the bowl judgments similar to the trumpet judgments? How were they different?

2. After the bowls, attention turned to Babylon, pictured as a beautifully adorned but utterly corrupt woman. In 17:5–6, what was said of her?

3. In 17:14, what was said of her and the beasts?

John shows us that although the witnesses for Jesus paid the ultimate price, they were nevertheless victorious over the ones persecuting and killing them.

4. In 18:2–3, what was said of her?

5. In 18:4-5, what warning was given to God's people?

Once again, the message to God's people was to stand uncompromisingly. They were to separate themselves from the world's power or be prepared to be judged with them.



Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Revelation 12:11 below.

“And they have _____ him _____ blood of the Lamb _____ the word _____ testimony, for they loved not _____ even unto death.”



Prayer and Reflection

List some ways we are tempted today to compromise ourselves with the world. Pray and ask the Lord to give you discernment to see those compromises clearly and the strength to avoid them.

Day 3

Read Revelation 19–20.

1. After the fall of “Babylon,” we hear from both “a great multitude” and the twenty-four elders. List all of the things that were said about God in 19:1–5.

2. How does the description of the Lamb’s bride in 19:8 compare to the description of Babylon from yesterday?

3. List all of the things that were said about the groom in 19:11–16. (Although the word “groom” isn’t used, the reference is clear.)

4. John told of a different kind of supper occurring as well. What happened in 19:20–21?

5. And, finally, what happened in 20:7-10 and 14-15?

Key Verse

Fill in the blanks for Revelation 12:11 below.

“_____ have conquered _____ by the blood of _____ and by the word of their _____, for they loved _____ their lives even _____.”

Prayer and Reflection

Spend some time meditating on what was said about God and the Lamb in today's questions, and what the two of them brought about. Praise God that regardless of how formidable, how strong, and how plentiful the enemies are, God reigns supreme. He and He alone has the power over sin and death. Ask Him to help you to live every day for Him in the certainty of that knowledge.

Day 4

Read Revelation 21-22.

With the devil, both beasts, and Death and Hades thrown into the lake of fire, the way is clear for the people of God to be “taken to heaven.” Except that’s not what happens.

1. In 21:1-2, what did John see?

2. In 21:3, what did John hear?

3. In 21:4, what did the voice say would be the result of that announcement?

4. In 21:22-23, what did John not see? Why were those no longer needed?

5. In the midst of Eden, there was a tree of life. What does 22:1–2a say will be found in the middle of the New Jerusalem?

Key Verse

Write Revelation 12:11 from memory below.

Prayer and Reflection

What will it be like to live in a place where heaven and earth are restored to their original (combined) state? Where God dwells in the midst of His people? Where He and His Lamb are sufficient light for everyone and everything? Where life is in the water and the trees? What will it be like to live in such a place? Thank the Lord in prayer for the final goal of God's Story.

Day 5

That is the Story of God. Now that we have made our way through the entire Story, let's look at it again in summary. This might also be a good opportunity to experience the Story aurally by reading the summary out loud.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and all that they contained, including humanity. And it was very good, perfect, and without sin. God walked in the garden with Adam and Eve; the border between heaven and earth was, if not nonexistent, at least permeable.

But Adam and Eve sinned by doing the one thing God told them they could not do. They and earth were cursed, and they were thrown out of God's garden into the world they had broken. Each successive generation demonstrated that humankind was now bent toward sin. Things soon went from bad to worse, and God decided to start over by sending a flood that blotted out all mankind except for Noah and his family. Even after that, mankind did not change, and God soon had to confuse their language to prevent them from doing more things He did not want them to do.

In spite of mankind's pervasive rebellion, God wanted to restore His creation to its original state. He set the plan to do so in motion by calling a man named Abram, telling him that He would make him a great nation, make his name great, and that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed. The rest of that portion of the Bible (which we know as the Old Testament) points towards the fulfillment of that promise.

God made a covenant with Abram (God would soon change his name to Abraham), telling him that his offspring would be afflicted for four hundred years. Abraham's grandson Jacob (also called Israel) and all of Jacob's extended family moved to Egypt to escape the effects of a famine. Their descendants were eventually enslaved there for the predicted four hundred years, a period during which there was no recorded word from God.

At the end of that time, God delivered the Israelites out of their slavery and led them to the land He had promised to their ancestor Abraham. The exodus of Israel out of Egypt is the central redemption story of the Old Testament. God made a covenant (the Mosaic covenant) with His newly created nation of Israel, and gave them the laws they needed to function—not just as a nation, but as His people—under His rule. The covenant contained a long list of good things that would happen to them if they worshiped Him and followed His law, and a longer list of bad things that would happen if they didn't.

Unfortunately, mankind's rebellious nature hadn't changed, and Israel eventually rebelled against God's rule. They demanded He give them a human king, like the nations around them had. God acquiesced, and eventually made a covenant with the second of those kings, David. This covenant stated that David's "house" (his descendants who would be kings) and David's kingdom would be permanent, i.e. extend into eternity.

David's son Solomon turned from God late in his life to other nations' false gods. As a result, God split the nation in two, taking the majority of the nation away from Solomon's son. The new nation, still called Israel, immediately abandoned worship of God. The remnant left to David's descendants, a nation called Judah, floated in and out of following God, abandoning Him more often than not.

This resulted in God sending men to both of the nations to remind them of the Mosaic covenant's stipulations and consequences. These men, called prophets, were sent over a period of several hundred years. The prophets used progressively harsher language to express God's anger at their abandonment of Him and their abuse of the poor, especially the fatherless, widows, and aliens (resident foreigners). Through the prophets, God called them to return to Him and reap the benefits or suffer the consequences of breaking the covenant. Sprinkled throughout these messages were hints of a future anointed one who would renew their hearts and bring them into a renewed land.

Israel and Judah inevitably did not listen, and both were eventually conquered by powerful nations. Israel fell to the Assyrians, and the

people were taken away and scattered throughout the Assyrian empire. Judah was conquered and the people were taken away, over a century later, by the Babylonians, who soon fell to the Persians. Seventy years after Judah's exile, the Persian king allowed them to return to their land, restore Jerusalem, and rebuild the temple that was destroyed by the Babylonians. But Judah's hearts were still hard, and God soon went silent for another four hundred years.

Just as the first four hundred years of silence ended in deliverance, so did this one, but deliverance of a very different kind than expected. Rome was the power of the moment, and they controlled the land they called Judea; the Jewish people were their subjects and were one of the only subject nations given permission to worship their own god. They assumed God was going to deliver them this time the same way He had in the exodus: by sending an anointed one (Messiah) who would defeat the ruling power (Rome), return them to self-governance, and restore full control of the land God had given them.

Instead, God gave them a baby.

Oh, but what a baby! Called Jesus in English, His very name means, "Yah-weh Saves." As Matthew made clear in his Gospel, Jesus was the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant (through you all the families of the earth will be blessed), the Davidic covenant (your seed will rule for eternity), and all of the prophetic hints that pointed to a future anointed one.

When He grew up and started His ministry, however, it became evident Jesus had no interest in an earthly kingdom. His message was about the kingdom of God (Matthew used the equivalent kingdom of heaven), and Jesus made clear He was here to initiate it. He also made clear that all who repented were welcome in the kingdom, including (and maybe especially) those labeled "sinners" by the Jewish religious leaders.

Predictably, none of this went over well with those religious leaders. They set themselves against Jesus, first by pointing out how He and/or His disciples violated the oral tradition, then by trying to trick Him with questions (and failing miserably). Unable to discredit Him, they finally

decided to enlist the help of the hated Romans to have Him killed.

Unknown to them, that was also part of the plan. His resurrection three days after His death, and subsequent appearances to His disciples and others, cleared up any doubts they had as to whether He really was the anointed one their Scriptures talked about. And they knew, because He had told them (see, e.g., Matt 6:10, 10:7-8), that their mission was to expand the kingdom of God on earth that Jesus had established, to continue His work of redeeming all of creation.

That included non-Jews. God had told Abraham from the beginning that He would bless all nations through him, but Israel had never been very good at that part of their mission. Jesus made that a core priority of His followers' mission, and through Peter, the apostle Paul, and others, non-Jews became a part of God's kingdom alongside their Jewish brothers and sisters.

Just as the Jewish religious leaders felt threatened by Jesus, and later by Jesus' followers, the Roman empire also felt threatened by the upstart religion. They had granted the Jews an exception to the requirement that all their subjects worship the Roman gods, but that exception was not forthcoming for these followers of Jesus. The result was occasional persecution, and when it was from the greatest empire in history to that date, it was formidable. Sometimes it led to the death of Jesus' followers, just as it had led to Jesus' death.

Some of Jesus' followers eventually decided discretion was the better part of valor, and compromised their beliefs and how they lived in order to stay on the safe side of the empire. It was into this environment that John wrote Revelation, urging his audience to stand for Jesus uncompromisingly. His message was that the church's witness, even in death, is more powerful than any empire. Our witness will be victorious because, ultimately, the One we are witness to will be victorious!

What's The Point?

The beauty of God's Story is that everyone can have a part in it. Jesus came to begin the process of redeeming and restoring all of God's creation, and He came to enlist us to be a part of that work (Eph 2:10), so that we would in turn enlist others (2 Tim 2:2).

What is your part in God's Story?

1. Join Him—the first thing is to become a follower yourself, to repent of your sin and place your complete trust in Jesus, to transfer from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of God (Col 1:13). Just as Jesus' death and resurrection were the beginning of the redeeming of God's creation, so your salvation is/was the beginning of your part in that redemption.

2. Know Him—finishing this tour through God's Story is likewise just the beginning. The journey involves:

Time in His word—God gave us His word so that we could know His Story, learn about Him, and learn how to live for Him.

Time with Him—Just as we don't get to know other people just by talking to them, so we don't get to know God just by talking to Him. Prayer is a conversation, involving listening more than talking. We are to take our requests, concerns, trials, etc. to God, but we are also to listen to what He has to say to us through the Holy Spirit.

3. Live for Him—To be a part of redeeming creation, we have to live for Him, not ourselves. We have to be about the things He wants us to do, when He wants us to do them, and how He wants us to do them. He has prepared things for us to do “beforehand” (before #1 above). He has given us spiritual gifts (Rom 12, 1 Cor 12, Eph 4), and put us in community (Heb 10:24-25), to equip and encourage us to accomplish those things.

 **Prayer and Reflection**

Pray and ask the Lord to expand your vision of your part in His Story. Ask Him what He has for you to do, and spend some time listening for His answer. Make this a regular habit, because what He has for us to do today might not be the same as what He had us do yesterday.

Wrap Up

Write out the key verse for each of the following sections:

Christ: Jesus Enters Our World

Christ: Jesus' Message

Christ: Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem

Christ: Jesus Dies on the Cross

Christ: Jesus is Raised from the Dead

Church: The Coming of the Spirit

Church: In Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria

Church: The Mission to the Gentiles

Church: The Gospel Spreads from Jerusalem to Rome

Consummation, Part One

Consummation, Part Two

How has going through the Story of God changed the way you view and/or study the Bible?

