

Friday Bible Study - Week Seven

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[0 : 00] Hey guys, I'm Brian, and welcome back to Friday Bible Study. This is our final Friday Bible Study, and each week we've been sort of tackling a different major topic of Scripture and diving in a little bit deeper to see what the Bible really has to say about that.

So we've talked about a lot of really important things, such as the Trinity and who is God, who is Jesus, what even is the Bible, who is the Holy Spirit. For this final topic, we want to really dive in and talk about the gospel, the riches of the gospel.

You know, the theologians have often said that the gospel is like a diamond in that it is multifaceted and complex, and as you sort of look at it from different angles, you see new nuances that you didn't notice before.

On the one hand, of course, the gospel is incredibly simple, right? The gospel is what Jesus did in his dying for our sins and rising again for our salvation. But why does it take a whole 66 books of the Bible and thousands of pages to explain such a simple message?

It seems like there might be more going on, and really diving in and examining some of the riches of the gospel can help us, I think, appreciate some of the beauty of the gospel that maybe we haven't seen before, which will lead our hearts to worship, and also help us to apply the gospel more deeply to our lives and help us be more grateful for the incredible redemption that we have through what Jesus Christ has done.

[1 : 28] So for the next 20 minutes or so, I want to look at the gospel of what Jesus did from a few different angles. And we're not going to be able to explore these things completely, but hopefully we just wet your appetite a bit for exploring the richness of the gospel.

Each angle will show us another layer of what Jesus accomplished. And with each idea, I want us to focus on how the gospel unites us to Jesus. Because we are joined to Jesus, united to him by faith, we receive all of the benefits of the gospel through being in Christ Jesus.

So the first thing I want us to see about Jesus is that Jesus was the fulfillment of God's ancient covenant promises. You know, sometimes when we talk about the gospel of how Jesus died for our sins, we're sort of pulling that idea out of its context and just applying it directly to our personal lives here in the 21st century without seeing the big story that it fits into.

And it's not 100% wrong to do that, of course, but it is missing so much of what makes this beautiful and powerful for us. Because Jesus did not come out of nowhere. He wasn't born out of nowhere. He was born as the culmination of age-old promises to God's people, the nation of Israel. This started with God's promise to Abraham, the patriarch of the nation of Israel, but the promise would extend to Abraham's offspring who would become the nation of Israel.

[2 : 57] We see this several times in the book of Genesis. For instance, in Genesis 17, we hear this promise. God says to Abraham, and I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God. So this is this promise to Abraham that God would be their God.

He would be a father to the people of Israel. He would watch over his covenant people, even when they were at their darkest moments. And his promises were unbreakable. He offered them an everlasting possession.

But here's what's quite remarkable. You know, the people of Israel never actually saw the fullness of those promises fulfilled. They never possessed the entire land of Canaan. But it wasn't because God was a liar.

These promises were always only ever going to be ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ himself. We learn this in the New Testament when Paul writes, for instance, in Galatians 3, where he says, now the promises made to Abraham, like the one we just read, and to his offspring, it does not say, and to offsprings, referring to many, but referring to one, and to your offspring, who is Christ.

[4 : 18] So Paul says, these promises were always pointing to Jesus. The offspring, the ultimate offspring that God promised, who would inherit the promise, was ultimately not a nation state, like the nation of Israel, or a racial group like the Jews, but it was Jesus Christ himself.

And that means that these covenant promises are open to anyone who is united to Jesus. It doesn't matter if you have Abraham's DNA or not. You can be included in God's covenant people, his chosen people, through Jesus, the true, ultimate offspring of Abraham.

And Paul says that this is the gospel. Look what he says in another place in Galatians 3. The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, in you shall all the nations be blessed.

And so then we who are of faith are blessed, along with Abraham, the man of faith. So here's how this applies to us. See, united to Christ, we are included in the covenant.

We're included. God has always had a chosen people, a covenant people, people for his own possession. He says, I'm going to be God to you and you will be my people. And those were Abraham's offspring, the people of Israel.

[5 : 34] Those were the ones that he rescued out of slavery in Egypt. They were the ones that he used to drive out armies that were far mightier than they were. Those were the ones who, even though they turned their backs on him time and time again and worshiped idols and broke God's heart, he still received his people back to him again and again because they were his.

And if you weren't Jewish, then you really couldn't say that God was for you in the same way because you weren't a part of his covenant people. But in the gospel, this changes now. Ephesians 2 puts it this way.

Remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. Pretty bleak. But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. So in other words, one of the results of the gospel that we don't talk about too much is that by the blood of Christ, we are in Christ Jesus.

And since we are in him, we are united to the true offspring of Abraham. That means we are brought near. We are no longer strangers to the covenants of promise. We are now included in the covenant.

[6 : 44] We are blessed right along with Abraham, the man of faith. And that means that we can know that God will be God to us. We will be his people. We can know God is for us just as much as he was for the people of Israel in ages past.

That means just like God rescued his covenant people from slavery in Egypt by sending plagues and going to war against Pharaoh, so also God will be our deliverer and go to war against the spiritual powers arrayed against us.

And just like God kept his covenant with his people through the wilderness and led them through the wilderness with a pillar of fire and smoke, just like he provided for them manna in the desert, so we can be sure as God's covenant people that God will never leave us or forsake us.

He will guide us and care for us. And just like God was always faithful to receive his people back again and again and forgive them even when they turn their backs on him, so also we can know that his forgiveness will be the same for us.

Because we are in Christ, we are included in this age-old promise, this promise that all of history has been building towards and culminates in what Jesus has done. So your inclusion, you being included in the covenant is a part of what the gospel is all about.

[7 : 56] But the Bible doesn't just speak of Jesus as the offspring of Israel in a generic way. Specifically, Jesus is the promised offspring of Abraham because he also was the promised Messiah or the King, the anointed one of Israel.

This is what the word Christ means. It's not Jesus' last name. It means Messiah or King. And so the next angle on the gospel I want us to look at is that Jesus didn't just come as the fulfillment of the covenant promises, but he also came as the representative king for his covenant people.

You know, in the Bible, kings are often spoken of as representatives of the nations that they govern. So that means that when kings failed, the whole nation failed as a whole because the king stood for the nation.

But when the king turned to the Lord, the whole nation was blessed. So when the king of Israel would win a victory, even the smallest and weakest kid in Israel could claim that as his own victory because the king had won it for him.

As the head of his people, the king stood for his people as a representative of his people. And so Jesus is not only the fulfillment of the promises made to Israel. As the ultimate king of Israel, Jesus is also the representative of Israel and the embodiment of everything that Israel was always meant to be.

[9 : 17] There are actually moments in the life of Jesus where it is as if the story of Israel is being retold all over again. One example of this is right at Jesus' birth, the wicked King Herod sought to have him killed and Jesus and his family flee to Egypt.

And when they return, the gospel of Matthew writes this. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet. Out of Egypt, I called my son. Now here's what's interesting. Matthew, who he quotes there, was talking about the nation of Israel being delivered out of Egypt. Out of Egypt in the exodus from Pharaoh, I called my son when they were slaves. God calls Israel his own son and he calls his children out of Egypt.

But now as Matthew looks at what's happening with Jesus under Herod, he sees a parallel. He sees that Jesus went through the same thing that Israel went through. Just like the people of Israel suffered under the wicked Pharaoh, now Jesus is suffering under the wicked Herod.

And just like they were called out of Egypt, so Jesus is called out of Egypt. It's as if there's a little retelling of the story of Israel in the life of Jesus. And then what happens when Jesus grows up?

[10 : 24] One of the first things he does at the beginning of his ministry is he's brought into the wilderness for 40 days. And that is a very clear parallel and allusion to the 40 years that Israel spent in the wilderness after being delivered from Egypt.

And then what does Jesus do when he comes out of the wilderness? He calls his 12 disciples, which is obviously reminiscent of the 12 tribes of Israel. And so we see that Jesus is the king of Israel who is the representative of the nation of Israel.

He's standing in the place of his covenant people as their perfect representative. Anywhere that the people of Israel failed, Jesus did not fail. And of course, as their representative, as their substitute in their place, Jesus does the unthinkable.

See, Jesus is the suffering substitute. As their representative king, he actually dies in the place of his people. And that means for us, his covenant people, that united to Christ, our king, we are forgiven through his substitution.

See, it is on the cross where Jesus is ultimately enthroned as king. The Romans, after whipping him, put a purple robe on Jesus, a regal robe. They put a crown, a kingly crown of thorns on him.

[11 : 43] And they even write an inscription over the cross that he is king of the Jews. It couldn't be more clear. It is on the cross more than anywhere else in the story of Jesus's life where he is shown to be the king of his people.

He is the representative of his people dying for his covenant people as their perfect substitute. And of course, because you and I are brought into this covenant story now, then Jesus is our representative as well.

So that means when we are united to Christ, it doesn't just mean that we're included in his covenant. It also means that we are forgiven. We are united to his death. And his death was for us. You know, the history of God's covenant people was actually a pretty dark history of failure. I'm not throwing stones at the nation of Israel. We're just all like them, right? Our personal histories are also histories of failure.

But on the cross, Jesus rewrites the history of his covenant people. When you doubt your forgiveness or your righteousness, you don't need to look at your history of mistakes.

[12 : 48] We look at Christ's history of obedience. We are no longer defined by our failures. United to Christ, we are defined by what our king did as our substitute, as a representative for his covenant people.

We are forgiven. And not just us, but all of Christ's covenant people by faith who are united to him. We become a forgiven community. And we together have in common our failure, but we also have

in common the fact that one greater than us stood in our place, our king, our Messiah, our perfect representative.

So as you can see, there is real value in seeing how what Jesus did connects to the story of Israel. God's covenant promises to Israel help us understand what Jesus did and why it matters.

It adds so much richness to the gospel. But I also want us to see before we close that what Jesus did, what he accomplished is so much bigger than just the nation of Israel. It's ultimately about the restoration of the whole world.

What Jesus did in the gospel is as big as creation. And so the last angle of the gospel I want us to see is that Jesus came into fallen creation as the first fruits of new creation.

[14:00] The story of the Bible, of course, starts with creation. But it's not very long. Just a couple chapters in, creation is not going great, right? There is an invader. An enemy comes into God's good world.

And he tempts God's creatures. And they choose rebellion. And then sin and death enter the world. And the whole rest of the story, creation is corrupted. It is broken. It is infused with sin and death. And it is longing to be restored and set right. And Jesus came and died and rose again, not just because you and I messed up personally to help us and forgive us.

He actually came ultimately because the whole world is messed up. And God intends to fix it and make everything the way it was always supposed to be. We see glimpses of this in Jesus' life.

First of all, in his ministry of healing. You know, some of us think about the life of Jesus and all the healings that he did. And maybe we just think that his healings were a flashy and impressive way of Jesus signaling to us that he was really God.

[15:04] But if that was it, he could have done a much better job of that, right? He could have made a laser show in the sky that said, I am God. But he didn't do that. Specifically in his miracles, primarily he healed people.

And when he was doing that, he was showing us a glimpse of the restoration that he wants to bring into this whole world. I love how one pastor puts it. Tim Keller writes, we modern people think of miracles as the suspension of the natural order, but Jesus meant them to be the restoration of the natural order.

The Bible tells us that God did not originally make the world to have disease and hunger and death in it. Jesus has come to redeem where it is wrong and heal the world where it is broken.

His miracles are not just proofs that he has power, but also wonderful foretastes of what he's going to do with that power. Jesus' miracles are a promise to our hearts that the world we all want is coming.

A new creation is what Jesus was bringing in. He was saying, there is a new creation coming. I'm going to restore everything. And ultimately, that's what the resurrection was about as well. Some of us haven't thought that much about the resurrection.

[16:07] We think maybe the cross is the important thing. That's where our sins were dealt with and forgiven. And the resurrection, I guess that's just proof that it worked, right? Proof that Jesus was God. But it's actually much more than that.

The resurrection is essential to the gospel because the resurrection is the inauguration of new creation. Jesus rises again in a glorified and incorruptible body.

And Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:20 that because Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead, he is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. In other words, his resurrection is a glimpse into our future in him.

He is the first resurrection of all of us who are united to him by faith. Just as we are united to him in a death like his, we will be united with him in a resurrection like his.

And so here's this third beautiful truth of our union with Christ, that we are united to Christ. We're restored as new creations. Because we're united to Christ, we're restored as new creations.

[17:07] Because we're in him, that means we will rise as heroes. The gospel of his death and resurrection was just the beginning, sort of like a preview of coming attractions. It's not just a preview for us, but for the whole world.

At the end of the Bible, in the book of Revelation, Jesus says, behold, I am making all things new. The whole world will be restored. And this is why Jesus came. It's why he rose, to start that restoration by destroying the enemies of sin and death and by beginning his restoration project in the lives of his covenant people who are joined to him by faith.

One day, all of the world will be new creation. But until that day, his covenant people exist in the middle of this world as a glimpse of the new creation that's coming.

We are joined to Christ. We are made new creations in Christ. Paul writes it this way in 2 Corinthians 5. He says, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, united to Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. That means if we're united to Christ by faith, then we begin to live as new creations right now, preparing for that day that's coming when he makes all things new.

[18:17] When what happened in the empty tomb at the resurrection of Christ is actually what happens all over this world. And everything is as it was always supposed to be. That means that right now, because we are experiencing new creation in Christ, right now we live in a different way than the rest of the world.

Because we're not defined by this world that's under the power of sin and death. In Christ and filled with the spirit of Christ, we live now as new creations waiting for that day. So, I know that I have said a lot and I've thrown out all these different angles of the gospel.

And again, maybe we haven't gone as deep as we could have. But hopefully it's just given you maybe a little, just a whetted appetite towards learning more about all the richness of the gospel. It's so simple and yet it's so deep. And hopefully we've deepened your awe of Jesus meditating on these gospel truths. Jesus came as the fulfillment of the covenant promises to Abraham. He came as the Messiah, our representative king. And he came as God's ultimate answer to the invaders of sin and death, bringing new creation into this fallen world. And we put our faith in him and we unite to him.

[19:27] And when we do that, we receive all of his great and precious promises.