

Session Four: The Story of the Gospel - Redemption

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[0 : 00] Welcome back to Gospel Growth. Again, I'm Brian Hart, and we've been looking at this big story of the gospel, how it includes how you can be forgiven and have a relationship with God, but it is so much bigger than that. It's a cosmic story. And so we looked at how this big story begins. It begins with creation of the universe, God making everything very good, but then immediately Adam and Eve sin, and that begins the rebellion of humanity, something that we call the fall. And as soon as that happens, we see that God gets to work putting things back together again. And that is what we're going to look at today, this next act in the story of the gospel called redemption. Now, in many ways, the rest of the Bible from Genesis 3 onwards is the story of redemption, the story of God fixing what humans have broken. I want to just pull out a few key moments in this story to help show you how you can trace this act of redemption through the Bible. If we fast forward just a little bit past Adam and Eve, we have the next crucial moment in the history of redemption when God calls a man named Abram who would become Abraham, and he creates a covenant with him, a relationship based on God's promise. In Genesis 12, it says, God says to Abram, and I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you, I will curse.

And in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. What God established with Abraham here is called a covenant, an unconditional promise based on a loving relationship, and it's how God saves his people. So this is really the next thing we see in this story of redemption is the giving of the covenant in which God saves a people for himself and for his purposes, for his redemptive purposes.

God chooses Abram to become a mighty nation, and he's going to take the descendants of this man, and he's going to make them into his people, not just for their own sake, but for the sake of the healing of the whole world through these people. God says that the whole world will be blessed, all nations will be blessed. And so the story of redemption has always been a story that really starts with God's covenant people, not just a story of individual persons trying to do the right thing, but a people being saved into this cosmic purpose that God has. Now, a few weeks ago, we said that every good story has multiple levels. We talked about how Star Wars can be, you know, there's many plot lines going on in that story, and there's the individual personal story between Luke Skywalker and his father, but there are other layers and bigger stories there. There's the rebellion and the evil empire, and here we're seeing something happen in this covenant that's sort of at that higher level of the story. God here is choosing one man, but it's about much more than one man. It's about this people that God is going to use to resist the evil empire, a people who are going to carry the light of God and his salvation into the world. Of course, Abram, the people that his descendants become, they're called the nation of Israel. God's hope for the nation of Israel is that they would be a city on a hill, that they would be a people after God's own heart, and he did everything for them. He set them free from slavery in Egypt. He opened the Red Sea. He brought them into the promised land. He gave them a rich inheritance, and it was all by grace. None of it was, you know, they didn't, these people, actually, the Bible tells us they actually weren't remarkable. They had done nothing special. God simply chose them and decided to set his love on them because of who he is, because he loved them.

Unfortunately, the story of the Old Testament continues to, as it continues to unfold, we see that the nation of Israel makes the same mistakes as Adam and Eve. They rebel. They begin to think that they can find joy, and they can find meaning and purpose and all the things that they want elsewhere. It's not that they stop believing in God. They just stop listening to him. They stop obeying him, and they decide to take their lives into their own hands. And so this whole story gets very, very messy, and yet again and again, God keeps showing grace. He keeps intervening to rescue, and to redeem these people who continue to turn their back on him. At one point, God even says to the people of Israel, do you know what it's like to love you? It's like being married to a prostitute who keeps leaving me and going to be with other lovers. God says that's what it's like to love Israel, and yet God remains faithful because of his promise. He's faithful to the covenant, and because his promises can't be broken. Somehow the promise was through this messy, unfaithful people of Israel that God would bring blessing and healing and restoration to the entire world. But the way that

[5 : 35] God was going to do this was very unexpected. No one really saw it coming, and certainly nobody expected that a young Jewish virgin named Mary would be visited by an angel and that she would become the mother of the Savior, Emmanuel, God with us, Jesus Christ. Jesus is God's rescue plan for the world.

And so this is the next, one of the next big moments in the story of redemption is the incarnation, where we see that God comes down to save. Incarnation literally means just in flesh.

You see, God gave us this great covenant. He gave us people this great covenant, this great promise. But at the end of the day, we needed more than God's promise. We needed God himself. And that's why Jesus came. John 1 14 says, And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory.

Glory is of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. God came to do for his people what they could not do for themselves. Jesus was the literal fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham.

Jesus is the blessing that comes through Israel for the sake of the nations, so that everyone might be blessed. In his life, he was completely obedient. He lived the life that Adam should have lived. He lived the life that every Israelite should have lived. He didn't listen to the lie. He didn't run away from God and rebel and find joy in his own ways.

[7 : 06] And he didn't take control of his own life. He was totally submitted to his Father. And he also came doing miracles and incredible works of healing. Jesus' miracles were...

People talk about, why did Jesus do these miracles? Well, they, in one sense, they were demonstrations of his power. But Jesus could have done all kind of impressive tricks to show people how powerful he was.

His miracles were also about healing people. This is part of God's plan of redemption. The world's broken. Everything's broken. And Jesus wants to set it right again.

And so he finds people with withered hands or who have skin disease. And when he heals them, he's restoring them to the way that they were originally supposed to be. Of course, the way that Jesus saves us goes beyond what he did in his life, doesn't it?

I mean, his life is important. His obedience to the Father. The miracles and the healing and the acts of compassion. But ultimately, the ministry of Jesus culminates not in anything he did as a living man, but ultimately in his death.

[8 : 17] We're going to zoom in and talk more about the cross of Jesus in a few sessions. But for now, we'll simply say that this next sort of high watermark in the story of redemption is the crucifixion, in which we see that God defeats the tyranny of sin.

The central reason that Jesus came was not just to show us how we should have lived, but to achieve salvation for us by conquering the enemies that stood against us. In Hebrews chapter 2, 14, it says, Since, therefore, the children share in flesh and blood, he, Jesus himself, likewise partook of the same things, that through his death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.

So Jesus, when he died, he stood in my place. He was my substitute. He died for my sins that I'd be forgiven. But he also died to take on the curse of sin that's affected the entire world, to destroy the very power of sin, to destroy the power of death, which is an amazing thing to think about.

Because we believe in the incarnation. God made flesh. That believes that we believe that it was God himself who hung on the cross for our sins, for our rebellion, for our spiritual prostitution.

For our constantly turning away from God. All the curses that those things deserve, they're all put on Jesus Christ, who was God himself, so that we can be made right with God.

[9 : 49] Again, this has been called the great exchange. God's standing in our place, getting what we deserve, so we can one day stand with Jesus and get everything that he deserves. But again, it isn't just about you and me and the forgiveness that we can get individually.

Colossians 1 says that he, Jesus, is the head of the body in the church. He's the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile just you and me to himself?

No, to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross. Jesus died for you and he died for me, but he also died for the sake of creating a new people, the church, a new nation, the people of God.

God always saves a people for himself. And through this act of death, of saving death, we can be reconciled to God, and not just us, but all peoples from all places.

It doesn't matter where you're from. It doesn't matter what you look like. It's for everybody. It's for the Jews, the Israelites, but it's for all nations. It's for the people who you think are really good. It's for the people you think are really bad.

[11 : 04] There is no one that this promise isn't for. It's for everyone. And if your faith is in Jesus, you don't just get a relationship with him. You now belong to something bigger than yourself.

You get a relationship to all these other people who are part of this family. The work of the cross was God's plan to save the whole world, and it really is the whole world.

Jesus has a plan to redeem everything. Remember, in Genesis, the curse affected the very ground. It affected the dirt, and Jesus has a plan to redeem everything. The creator bore the curse of his creation in order to set his creation free.

But the story doesn't stop at the cross. The next moment here is the resurrection. And the resurrection is a promise of complete restoration, the complete defeat of death.

The resurrection means many things. Most obviously, it proves that Jesus is who he said he is. He is the son of God. Who else can come back from the grave?

[12 : 08] If he would have stayed in the tomb, we would have no reason to believe that he is any different from any other man. And yet, the resurrection means even more than that. It means that we can actually believe that Jesus has defeated death itself.

And it's not just for him. It's for all of us. It's for everyone. In 1 Corinthians 15, the apostle Paul talks about this. He says, For as by a man came death, that's Adam, by another man, Jesus, has come also the resurrection of the dead.

For as in Adam all dies, so also in Christ shall all be made alive, but each in his own order. Christ, the firstfruits, and then it is coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

For he must reign until he's put all his enemies under his feet, the last enemy to be destroyed is death. So through Adam came sin and death, but through Christ comes something else entirely.

Hope, resurrection, redemption, and freedom. So Paul calls Jesus the firstfruits. The firstfruits is a word that refers to, in the harvest season, people would come into the temple and they would give just, at the very beginning of the harvest, they would take some of the harvest and bring it in to the temple as a gift.

[13 : 27] But it was the promise of more that is to come. And that's what Paul is saying. The resurrection wasn't, Jesus' resurrection wasn't just about him, it's about you. He is the initial promise that more is coming.

It's going to be all of us. We will all rise. This means that even though the story isn't over, the end is written. The resurrection tells us how the story will end.

We will one day be brought back to life in new bodies, restored. And all of that's achieved by Jesus. But where is he now? Well, this is important and it's often overlooked.

Jesus, at the end of, after the resurrection, he spent a short time with his disciples and then he ascended into heaven and he ascended in the body. And his absence is important.

The ascension means this. Jesus reigns in heaven while the Holy Spirit helps us on earth. Jesus said this would be necessary for us to live in this age we're in right now. He said in John 16 to his disciples, he said to them, I tell you the truth, it's to your advantage that I go away.

[14 : 32] Talking about his ascension. For if I don't go away, the helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And then he goes on to say, when he comes, when the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.

For he won't speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he'll speak. And he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what's mine and he'll declare it to you. The spirit is going to practically help you.

He's going to help you as God goes about his work of redeeming the world. Jesus is ruling on a throne in the body, still in the body, and yet he has sent his Holy Spirit to help us, to lead us, to guide us, to convict us of sin.

The story of redemption is not good advice. It is good news. We don't do the gospel. We believe the gospel and then we respond to the gospel.

And this story is our story. It's the story of the whole history of the world. And it's our history if we're in Christ. Our redemption in Christ is the most important thing that has ever happened to us.

[15 : 40] So, as you gather in your groups to discuss, I would encourage you to consider, do you see the story of the Bible as your story? The story of redemption that's continuing to be told in your life?

And are you living in light of this story? Amen.