

META | Redemption Fulfilled

INTRODUCTION

Grab your Bible and open them up to Matthew 1. We are continuing our 5-week study through the story of the Bible: THE META-NARRATIVE. When we started, I compared the story of Scripture to a 5 act play. Today we are in Act 4: REDEMPTION FULFILLED. This is the point at which we see how all of the details that have been laid out up to this point come together. So let me start by giving a quick recap of where we have been, so that we can effectively bring these pieces together into harmony.

RECAP

The Bible starts with creation: there was nothing and then there was something. God creates His kingdom and He creates people to inhabit it. But more than just inhabit, God gives the people that He creates the authority to be His ambassadors here on earth. This task is made possible through the relationship that God has with them. They live in harmony with God and that harmony is passed on to the good creation they live in.

This perfect existence is contingent on their reliance on God. This trust in God is made concrete through a single command: do not eat from the one tree in the middle of the garden. They choose to doubt God, to break the one command, and in this, they bring the grief and shame of sin into the world. Their relationship with God is broken and the good world that they live in is not all good anymore. The punishment deserved for the creation rebelling against the creator is death, but God has another plan. God's plan is to redeem His people.

He begins this redemptive process in a promise to Abraham. He promises Abraham that He will bless him, be with him, use him and his descendant to bless the nations. God renews this promise to Abraham's son Isaac, his son Jacob, and to Jacob's son Judah through the blessing of Jacob on his sons in Genesis 49. If you are reading through the Bible with us, you would have just read this.

One of Jacob's sons, Joseph, has his story told in great detail. We see God using kidnapping, betrayal, wrongful imprisonment to ultimately bless His people by protecting them from famine. God's people become a nation and are enslaved by the Egyptians. God uses their rescue as a means of introduction to them. He reveals Himself as a God of:

Power: with the ability to control rivers, bugs, weather, sickness, and even split the sea

Presence: He is with his people: in a cloud, a storm, a tabernacle, a temple, God dwells with His people.

Purpose: Everything that God is doing is for a reason. They may not be presently known to Israel, but in His comments to Moses, we see that He knows exactly what needs to happen and He is working to bring it to fulfillment.

God gives His people a purpose: to be a kingdom of priests, and He gives them the means to do it: the Law. The Law will help Israel retain this harmony with God and creation that sin has destroyed. Israel, like their father Adam, decided to pursue their own wisdom of how the world works rather than submitting to God's perfect plan.

God takes them across the desert into the land that He had promised Abraham. He helps them conquer and subdue the land as far as they are willing to trust Him. Their unwillingness once again to believe that God is good, leads them into one bad situation after another. But God continues to rescue them because of the promise He had made.

God establishes a monarchy for His people and works through this picture of kingship to promise an eternal kingship. A kingdom that will be forever with a king who is perfect. He makes this promise to David, the king who God uses to give a glimpse of the joy of this coming kingdom. Once again the people of God are more attached to the glimpse, the picture, than they are to the

source. They once again turn away from God, but this time things are different. God is still with his people, but He wants His people to recognize that they are not exempt from needing a savior. They have not arrived simply because they are Israel. Through the prophets, God makes it clear that the promise that he made to Adam, Abraham, and David is still in effect: salvation is coming in human form.

SETTING THE SCENE

Today we flip into the New Testament, and as we do let me lay out 3 ways that the New Testament relates to the Old. They are different, which is why they have been named old and new:

the NT exists to continue the story that the OT started

This is the simplest relationship: the New Testament takes the story that started in Genesis and continues it. So while the characters seem all new, the problems that they face differ, and the general purpose of God's work seems wholly new, we should not assume that the New Testament does away with the Old. When we hear the terms 'old' and 'new' we should not think of it as God's original idea that didn't work out, and God's new plan to fix it. Instead, as we have been studying it, the Bible is one story, that includes a major shift when Jesus comes on the scene. So the NT doesn't replace the OT, but it does...

Shed new light on the events of the OT

Some bible scholars today are pushing a strict historical approach to interpretation. What this means is that they reject the notion of reading the OT through the lens of the NT. They deem it a misrepresentation of what the Hebrew authors originally meant. The problem with this is that forget a very important part of the inspiration of Scripture, that is, the Holy Spirit. If God was recording His Word through human hands, than there can easily be truth contained in their words that they were not fully aware of. Not could be, there was. One of the more transformational studies I ever did to see the relationship of the OT and NT (which was just a few years ago at the recommendation of another pastor), was to read through the NT and highlight every time that the OT is quoted. Then go back and look up that text in the OT and highlight it. Then read the OT and see where these verses fit into the flow of the writing. Some of the time you can see the connection, they are prophetic announcements; but other times it is obvious that the authors had one intent, while God obviously had another. This doesn't mean that they were wrong. It just means that the truth had not been revealed so that they could understand it fully. The events of the NT then are necessary to understand what the OT exists to teach us. Jesus makes this clear in John 5:39-40:

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

So the OT was about Jesus and it took the revelation of the NT to make it clear. If you try to understand the OT without Jesus, you will search it in vain. So more than just shedding light on the OT...

the NT exists to fulfill the promises of the OT

As we dig into the NT what we will see is that it isn't just a continuation and a more complete revelation, but the NT is the fulfillment, the completion of the promises and signs. It is the point at which the tension that has been brewing is finally relieved. Jesus himself made it clear when he said in **Matthew 5:17**:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Jesus is making it clear that He does not make the OT less valuable (to overrule it), nor does He simply add to it. Instead, Jesus makes the true meaning of the OT discernable through His PRESENCE ushering in of the KINGDOM OF GOD.

That is the shift in purpose, there is also a shift in culture between the OT and the NT. Between the OT and the NT there are 400 years known as the intertestamental period. The fact that it is not recorded in the canon of Scripture, the collection of books that make up the one big book, does not mean that it is not important. There is a major shift in culture from Malachi to Matthew and we need to set this scene because it plays a major role in the events to come.

We left Israel spread all across the Middle East. They had been exiled to Assyria and Babylon, with a remnant, a portion of the nation of Israel returning home to rebuild Jerusalem. As we open up to Matthew we see that Rome now rules the roost, as a matter of fact, they rule just about everything. Their way of doing business was not as cooperative as the previous nations. They ruled with an iron fist. Israel felt the great weight of their oppression as they anxiously awaited the promised kingdom of God.

From the writings of the prophets, scholars had worked together a basic structure of what was to come:

God would begin by renewing the nation of Israel. They would be cleansed and brought back to glory as God's holy nation. God would use this renewed nation to bring restoration to the entire creation. This would all be done through a Messiah: an anointed king from the line of David, who would establish his rule and reign for eternity.

As time passed and Israel remained enslaved there began to be differing views on what this kingdom would look like. Some understood the age to come, as they called it, as a time when God would work in such a way as to reveal His lordship to even the Gentiles, so that they could worship the one true king as their own. In this view, the kingdom was about God bringing a purity of worship in the Promised Land, which would bless all who dwell there: Jew and Gentile.

As time passed and animosity grew this became the minority view. The anticipation changed from a king who would reestablish the harmony between the creator and His creation into a king who would vindicate Israel. A king who would lead them to victory in battle so that he may bring Israel back to former glory. This is the mindset, the scene, to which Jesus enters.

The Bible makes it very clear that Jesus is the focal point of the story and it does it from the first verse of the NT. I told you we would start in Matthew 1, verse 1 says this:

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

This verse is followed by a genealogy from Abraham to Jesus, making it clear to those reading, from the very beginning that the story that they are about to engage in is about no mere man. This is the Messiah that had been prophesied about.

The story begins with an angel appearing to Mary to tell her she is pregnant. Which is a shock to her because she is still wearing her chastity ring. Her fiancé, Joseph considers breaking off the engagement, but God sends an angel to talk him out of it. Look at what the angel says to him (20-23):

Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

*“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).*

The angel is making a statement not only to Joseph, but to anyone who knows the story. The angel begins by addressing him, as: Joseph, son of David. This is not because Joseph did not know who he was, but so we will understand that this is in David's line. The angel goes on, he will be named Jesus, which means Savior. This is the king from David's line who would establish the Kingdom of God forever.

The angel goes on to quote from **Isaiah 7.14**, one of the promises of the coming Kingdom. He attaches that promise to this event, confirming that Mary is the virgin, and the child she now carries is Immanuel. Then he tells us what Immanuel means: GOD WITH US. What we see is that the promise that God was making, the Messiah that was to come, the king who would rule forever, THE KINGDOM, was all about God dwelling with His people. Healing the relationship that was broken at the fall.

Before Jesus even appears, the angel has already been made clear to the reader who this is. He is the one who has been anticipated.

Jesus is born in a manger...I'm not going to spend too much time here, because we covered it pretty completely one month ago. Joseph and Mary have to flee to Egypt when Jesus is very little...why? Even Herod believed that He was the promised one; this was a threat to Herod's power. So he ordered all of the male babies 2 and under to be killed to eliminate the threat.

Jesus grows up the big brother all of us are glad we didn't have. If you think your older sibling set the bar high, can you imagine what it was like to be Jesus' little brother? C'mon James, Jesus never talks back. Jesus was perfect, but His parents were not, so...

Jesus lives for 30 years without us knowing too much about his life. Luke tells us a story about Jesus at the temple, but other than that, we know nothing about his childhood. All of a sudden, after 30 years of relative obscurity, Jesus shows up at one of His cousin John's baptism parties. John had been preparing the way for Jesus ministry, calling the people to repent and prepare themselves for the coming Messiah. When Jesus walks into the water, John identifies Him as the one whose sandals he is unworthy to untie. Then God identifies Jesus, with a voice from heaven as:

my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.

There is the beautiful picture here of the trinity (God in 3 persons) with Jesus present on earth, God the father as a voice from heaven, and the Spirit descending on Jesus as a dove, initiating His ministry.

At this point in Luke's gospel we have another genealogy, but one that is different in size and scope than Matthew's version. This has bothered some people, why does Jesus have two different genealogies? In Matthew we see a bloodline genealogy, it is meant to show that Jesus was a direct descendant of both Abraham and David. This second genealogy is more of a symbolic genealogy (it isn't meant to be perfect), and it ties Jesus all the way back to Adam. Paul helps explain to us why Luke would do this in Romans 5, where he refers to Jesus as the second Adam. In Luke, this description of Jesus as the new Adam comes just before he goes off into the desert to be tempted by Satan. So Jesus undergoes temptation, in the same way that Adam and Eve were tempted, with Satan presenting Him with all sorts of promises. Rather than giving in to it as Adam did, as every one of us has, Jesus refutes the words of Satan with the words of God, and sets Himself up as the perfect spotless lamb capable of taking the sins of the world upon himself. As the New Adam, he alone is able to reverse the effects of sin in the world.

So Jesus is the New Adam, but He is also the New Israel. As Jesus is in the wilderness being tempted by Satan, He quotes the OT to combat Satan's luring. What does he quote specifically? Deuteronomy. He quotes the portion of the Bible where Israel was in the wilderness. What did they do when they were hungry? They complained. They turned away from God. Jesus is fulfilling the role of Israel: to be a holy nation, a kingdom of priests, a light to the world. He is doing what they were called to and failed to do.

We see this imagery repeated when Jesus gathers together His disciples, those who he is going to entrust to gospel with. How many does he call? 12. How many tribes of Israel? 12. This is not just a coincidence. Jesus takes these 12 guys and he begins to teach the people. But He doesn't just teach good moral lessons, as some people might say, but He came to tell the people that the kingdom had come. Look at **Mark 1.14-15**:

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

What Jesus is declaring to the people is that they no longer have to wait. They don't need to do something to appease God or make right what they have done. What they need to do is repent and believe. Give up they trust they have in themselves, and believe in Him. Believe what? Believe that the king and kingdom are Jesus. Believe that the relationship with God that was destroyed in Eden is now going to be repaired. Believe that the power and authority of God is present on earth; Jesus is God.

Jesus doesn't want them to just take His word for it. He tells them over and over again who He is, but he also manifests His power over and over again. He heals the sick. He tells the storm to stop. He makes the blind see. People are raised from the dead. But people still wonder: is this really the answer? And not just people of little faith. John the Baptist, who lived in the desert, ate bugs and honey and wore camel hair; the guy who proclaimed that the kingdom was coming and that Jesus was the one, wasn't sure. He sent people to Jesus specifically to ask: are you the one who is to come or should we look for another? And Jesus answers (**Matthew 11.5-6**):

the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

Jesus is quoting Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah. He is saying: the details that mark the Messiah are the things that I am doing. I am not just doing miracles because I am a nice guy or because I like showing off. I am doing these things because I am declaring that I am the Christ. Jesus says, you can believe what I am saying because you see what I am doing. My miracles are a sign of my authority over this world. I am king of the kingdom.

The people understood this message of Jesus. He declared Himself king, so they wanted to crown him king...we see that in **John 6.15**. When He comes to Jerusalem, they celebrate and they wave branches and lay their coats down and proclaim:

Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!

This is a royal entry. They understood the message of Jesus. Here he was to usher in the kingdom and restore Israel. They were excited. But the kingdom that Jesus presented to them was not what they expected. When Jesus came into Jerusalem they wanted Him to start kicking the Romans out, but instead He went into the temple and kicked the Jewish people out.

His teachings were strange. He talked about the kingdom of God, a lot, but instead of focusing on how awesome Israel was going to be, He kept pointing to them to their relationship to God. One of the more famous examples being the parable of the treasure in the field, Matthew 13:44:

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

What is Jesus saying? He is telling them that the kingdom of God is not going to come and give you all of the power in this world. As a matter of fact, to the eyes of this world it will remain hidden. But when you find it, when you see its glory, nothing will measure up. He is saying: I AM RIGHT HERE IN FRONT OF YOU. Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. I am worthy. Many people do.

Then He started talking about dying. He tells His disciples that he is going to die. Peter even tries to rebuke Him for it (good try Peter). But the concern of the disciples is warranted. If He is the kingdom, then when is He going to rescue them from oppression? When is he going to show the glory of Israel? When is he going to redeem them?

What they didn't understand is that it is in His death that He intends to accomplish this. What God does is use the very sin that brought the earth into destruction to redeem it. In the garden we saw that Adam and Eve disobeyed God so that they could have the power of God. Jesus' death was the result of religious leaders who were afraid of the power and authority that He manifested and wanted to have that power for themselves. So they accused Him falsely. They arrested Him. Beat Him. They turn the people against Him. Ultimately, they put Him on a cross to slowly suffocate. But it is by His stripes that we are healed. He was the innocent sacrifice whose blood covers the penalty that we deserve. It covers the penalty by washing us clean. In Jesus, we are made holy. This is manifested at His death.

The moment that He breathed His last, the Bible tells us that the curtain in the temple tore in two. That curtain separated the holy place from the holy of holies. The holy of holies was the resting place for the ark of the covenant...the seat of God. It was the earthly place where God dwelt. No one was allowed to enter the holy of holies except the high priest once a year. And he would go in for one thing and one thing only: to make the sacrifice for the sake of the people. The tearing of the temple curtain meant that this sacrifice no longer needed to happen and that human beings were now able to come in to the presence of God. Jesus' sacrifice was a sufficient payment for the sin of the world. His death brought about the kingdom that was promised.

In living the perfect life, Jesus fulfilled the Mosaic covenant, as a perfect representation of living in proper relationship with God, others, and the world. In His death, he fulfilled the Adamic covenant, crushing the head of Satan. He fulfilled the Abrahamic covenant, providing the means by which Israel would be a great blessing to the rest of the world. In paying the penalty for sin, He gave us the reason behind the rainbow, God's grace to a people who deserve death.

Then Jesus fulfilled the covenant with David; to do this He had to be resurrected. Because a dead king can't reign for eternity. Jesus stepped out of the grave, came back from death, to show that he had authority over this world. Nothing, not even death, was going to hold back the kingdom of power that Jesus came to proclaim. The last we see of Jesus on this earth is in the Ascension, Jesus returns to heaven to rule over this world from His throne. We will pick up the story there next week, to look at what the work of Jesus means for how we live today, but I want to leave you with three truths we all need to hold on to firmly. We need to hold firmly because these truths give us the humility and confidence to know ourselves in light of Christ:

1. Jesus was killed because of us. He died because sin had to be paid for, and that includes the sin of you and me.

2. Jesus is sufficient. This means that there is nothing additional that you must do to make His work 'worth it.' Grace is a gift; receive it with joy.
3. Jesus reigns over His kingdom. While what we can see sometimes makes it seem otherwise, Jesus is fully in control of what is happening.

Or to put it another way. You messed up, Jesus saves you, and He will make sure that you make it to the end. That's the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is why we are here: first, it is the only reason that we could be here, in communion with God. Second, it is the motivation for us to be here, to celebrate what He has done.