



“Understanding the Bible”

Section 3: What is the Message of the Bible?



Unit 3.1 – Stepping Back to See the Big Picture

I) From the Telescope to the Microscope

- So far through this study we have uncovered what the Bible is and how it came to be. Now we get an opportunity in our third section to take a journey through the pages of Scripture to discover its glorious message. The term most often used by Christians to describe the central message of the Bible is the word gospel, which means “good news.” In the weeks ahead, we will see how God’s good news is progressively revealed throughout the biblical story. We will also see through the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ that this good news culminates with an unspeakable offer of having an eternal relationship with our Creator.
- As we begin this new section, we will start our gospel search from 30,000 feet as we capture a telescopic view of the big picture of Scripture. Then through each unit, we will narrow down our focus to get a more microscopic view of how God’s story uniquely unfolds. This approach to reading and understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ from the telescope and the microscope is what author Matt Chandler calls looking for “the gospel in the air” and “the gospel on the ground.”

II) It’s the Same Old Story

- As we start our search telescopically to discover the gospel message, we need to consider how the biblical storyline has found its way into almost every story ever told. Our world was created good, was eventually broken, and is now frantically searching to be rescued and restored. This is the reality of our universe according to the Bible, but our movies, books, and music also echo this same story line in everything we read, see, and hear. Hollywood is notorious for mass-producing films that have one of three story lines: (1) **Man Falls in a Hole** (Things start off good; man falls in a hole; someone helps him out; he is restored and things are good again) (2) **Boy Meets Girl** (Boy meets a girl and it’s amazing; he acts stupid and she acts crazy; boy finally learns and gets the girl); (3) **Rags to Riches** (Girl is born into bad family; she is rescued by a boy but things go bad; they break up; he overcomes the odds and rescues her; they live happily ever after). Every one of these storylines shows us a good beginning, a tragic middle, and a glorious end. We realize when we read Scripture that this all comes from the reality that the Bible reveals to us about our past, present, and future as believers in Christ.
- Romans 8:22-23 says, “²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” We know we are not quite right and we need to be redeemed. This story has been written on our very hearts so that we might reach out to grasp the hand of a savior.

III) Creation: God Creates Everything Good

- The story of Scripture begins with a good God who makes a good creation. We learn that God creates everything in six days and rests on the seventh day enjoying the fruits of his labor. But, we find that the crown jewel of His creation is what He makes at the end of the sixth day before He enters His sabbath. Genesis 1:26-27 says, “²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” When God finished creating at the end of each day He said “it was good,” but at the end of the sixth day when He made human beings in His image, God said it was “very good.”

IV) Fall: Mankind's Sin Brings Separation

- Although God made everything good, mankind sinned against God as image-bearers, tainting the goodness of what He had made. Genesis 3:6-7 says, *"6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths."*

V) Promise: God Promises to Restore Order

- Mankind could have been left in a state of eternal hopelessness and despair, but God made a promise that He would redeem us from our broken state. Genesis 3:14-15 says, *"14 The Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.'" This promise marks the Bible's very first mention of a gospel message.*

VI) Redemption: Christ Redeems God's People from Sin

- To fulfill this promise, human beings needed a savior to take the punishment we deserved for our sinful violation of God's unblemished holiness. Jesus Christ became our precious lamb who took away our sins by taking our punishment on a Roman cross. The prophet Isaiah gave us a vivid illustration of how this crucifixion would take place hundreds of years before it happened. Isaiah 53:5-6 says, *"5 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. 6 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."*
- In the New Testament, we see many passages that shed light on this substitutionary atonement of Christ for our eternal salvation. The glory of the shed blood of Jesus Christ for our forgiveness is beautifully expressed in Ephesians 1:7 when it says, *"7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace."*

VII) Restoration: God Restores Through Re-Creation

- Scripture teaches that God redeemed us because He is in the business of taking old things and making them new. Believers will one day dwell in a New Heavens and New Earth and live in a resurrected body that will be incapable of sinning or wearing out for all of eternity. We will once again be physical as well as spiritual, and will experience the full potential of our humanity, enjoying a restored fellowship with the Lord God that will continue forever. Revelation 21:5 says, *"5 And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.'"*

VIII) Heading On a Journey Back Home

- Glancing at our glorious future as resurrected Christians living on a resurrected earth, we should not let the fact escape us that we are returning to the very place that Adam and Eve were kicked out of after they sinned against God: A garden! Here are three passages that help us to see the beauty of returning to a garden where there will be a river of life and tree of life that we can partake of eternally at no cost:
 - a) Revelation 22:1-2 – *1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month.*
 - b) Revelation 22:14 – *"14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates."*
 - c) Revelation 22:17 – *17 The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.*