

☞ What is the Bible's overall message?

☞ Review last week: **Reasons to trust the reliability of the Bible:**

☞ **It has one central message.** It has 66 books written in different literary styles, by 40 different authors with diverse backgrounds over 1600 years, yet it contains one central message.

☞ **It has transforming power.**

☞ **Archaeological evidence supports it:** 1000's of archaeological finds in the Middle East support the Biblical record.

☞ **It has numerous prophecies fulfilled:** The Bible is the only book in the world that has precise, specific predictions that were made 100's of years in advance and that were literally fulfilled.

--Norman Geisler... *There's more evidence that the Bible is a reliable source than there is for any other book from the ancient world.*

Today:

Since the Bible is God's Word, what is he trying to tell us?

Some will say...

- √ The Bible is God's rule-book.
- √ The Bible tells how to live a happy, prosperous life.
- √ The Bible tells how to live a good, moral life.
- √ The Bible warns that sin kills.
- √ The Bible promises that Jesus saves.
- √ The Bible explains how to get to heaven.

Just like a good novel, the beginning and the end tell a lot about the main plot...

☞ **As it was:** compared to **As it will be:**

☞ Genesis 1:1 (**heaven and earth**)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Revelation 21:1 (***new heaven and earth***)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,

☞ Genesis 2:10 (***a river***)

A river watering the garden flowed from Eden

Revelation 22:1

then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb

☞ Genesis 3:8 (***God, in person***)

the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day

Revelation 21:3

I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."

☞ Genesis 2:9 (***tree of life***)

In the middle of the garden was the tree of life

Revelation 22:2

On each side of the river stood the tree of life,

☞ Genesis 3:22-24 (***sin lost the right to the tree of life***)

the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." **23** So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. **24** After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

☞ Revelation 22:14 (***salvation restores the right to the tree of life***)

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

☞ Genesis 1:26-28 (***mankind rules the earth***)

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." **27** So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. **28** God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

☞ Revelation 22:3-5 (***mankind rules with Christ***)

The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. **4** They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. **5** There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

The beginning and the end of the book are virtually identical!

Originally, God created everything and it was "very good." In the end, God will re-establish his creation and it will be "very good." But currently, things in this world are not very good!

We see at the beginning that God established a relationship with mankind. In the end he will re-establish that relationship. In the beginning God created man to rule over his kingdom on earth. In the end God will re-establish man's place in the kingdom.

☞ So, the overall message of the Bible, in one word, is this: **"Redemption"**

= the act of saving something from a declined, dilapidated, or corrupted state and restoring it to a better condition

☞ In a paragraph, it's this: **"Mankind was designed to rule the earth in relationship with God, but sin has disrupted that plan. Through Jesus Christ, the original plan is being restored and mankind can be redeemed. God will reestablish his Kingdom on earth!"**

God's Kingdom is a recurring theme in the Bible...

- √ Genesis begins with the creation of man for the purpose of ruling over the earth, but man rebelled.
- √ The Gospel that Christ preached was the Gospel of the kingdom. (Mt. 4:23)
- √ Paul, the great apostle, preached the message of the kingdom. (Ac. 28:30ff)
- √ The last book of the Bible, Revelation, celebrates the everlasting establishment of God's kingdom, and man's inclusion in it. (Rev. 11:15; 21:7)

Our current problem is sin, and the solution is salvation through Jesus Christ.

We can see throughout the Bible that God is continually reaching out to man for restoration, but man continually rebels against God.

- √ God created Adam; Adam disobediently ate the forbidden fruit.
- √ God made a covenant with Noah, Abraham and Moses; but they all sinned and failed to perfectly carry out his plans.
- √ God called the nation of Israel; Israel fell into sin and rebelled repeatedly.
- √ God called David (a man after his own heart); but David sinned, too!

These all demonstrate how we cannot save ourselves. Then, God finally sent his own son, Jesus, who obeyed him wholeheartedly without fail. Now, through Jesus Christ, we can have a relationship with God again! Not only that, but it sets us on the right course to become rulers in his kingdom with him!!

☞ **So, let me sum this whole thing up...**

- √ **This world is not as it should be.**
- √ **Man was designed to have a close relationship with God and even partner with him in overseeing the Kingdom.**
- √ **Sin and rebellion disrupted that original plan.**
- √ **God continually reaches out to man in order to restore the plan, but man continues to rebel and persist in sin.**
- √ **Since no man could fully accomplish God's plans, he sent his very own son to fix everything once and for all.**
- √ **We can still be included in God's plan by submitting to the authority and Lordship of Jesus Christ.**
- √ **God wants as many as possible to be restored, thus he patiently waits.**
- √ **But very soon he will personally come to earth and finally put an end to sin and rebellion.**
- √ **Then his original plan will be fulfilled and we will rule and reign with him!**

Colossians 1:12-23

giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. **13** For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, **14** in whom we have **redemption**, the forgiveness of sins... **19** For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, **20** and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. **21** Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. **22** But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— **23** *if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.*

☞ **Our assignment now is to follow Christ and surrender to his leadership. He will develop his character in us so that we will be prepared to rule with him when, in the end, he returns.**

God's message to us in the Bible is "Redemption." He is restoring all things. It's much more than just a set of rules or warnings. Through Christ we can be restored to our rightful place in the Kingdom. That's a big deal!

--James Rutz, The Endgame of God... Envision what the Garden of Eden was originally like: A perfect life on a higher plane, where we were doing splendid work and didn't have to spend half our time on damage control for our own stupidities. Yet now, in this heart-stopping endgame, God is raising us to an even higher level. Don't just slide into heaven under the wire; become the kind of person who keeps defeating the evil in this world, and when you get to Heaven, you won't just barely qualify for a condo, you'll "own the joint!" Now, there's a goal worth shooting for!