

## Introduction to the Bible – Week 4

- *italics (lower case or ALL CAPS) show what students should write in their student outline*
- **bold (including bold italics and bold ALL CAPS) shows what appears in the student outline**
- regular text is used for lecture notes; ALL CAPS are used for emphasis

### Look back on last week's reading

Ask the students if they had any questions from their reading last week. I check the papers they turn on the way in and answer some of those.

If time, I briefly highlight a passage or two from their reading for last week, and do a sample application. I have always preferred to go over Peter's reaction in Luke 5:8 ("depart from me for I am a sinful man"). I show that Jesus did not disagree, but redirected him to the purpose of "fishing for men."

Briefly Review the handout "Why Believe the Bible?," section of the philosophical evidence

### New Testament

27 books:

- **history (the Gospels and Acts)**
- **epistles (letters) (Romans – Jude)**
- **prophecy (Revelation)**



### Overview of the Life of Jesus

*Note to teachers:* In this section, we do a twenty minute, "high altitude" overview that aims to show the amazing and dramatic series of events in Jesus' life.

#### Eternal Preexistence (John 1:1-3, 14)

Jesus left the eternal community of love (the Trinity) to come seek us out.

#### Miraculous Birth (Matt. 1 & 2; Luke 1 & 2)

Jesus' birth in an animal trough and the announcement of his birth to lowly shepherds is incongruous with his royal identity! This foreshadows who Jesus would identify with.

## **Baptism and Temptation (Mark 1)**

Both Jesus' baptism and temptation are ways he identified with fallen humanity. His temptation set the stage for the cross as a cosmic battle with Satan.

### **Public Ministry**

#### **Preaches a Revolutionary Gospel**

Jesus' message levels the outsiders and the insiders: all are welcome and all need repentance. Being born a Jew is not good enough.

#### **Calls Disciples**

Jesus called ordinary men who knew their need to for grace, rather than the self-assured religious leaders. Many of the events of Jesus' life were training situations for his disciples.

#### **“Signs & Wonders”**

Miracles validated Jesus' claim to be the Messiah illustrated spiritual truths (especially in John's gospel.).

#### **Violates Religious Traditions**

When Jesus did this, it exposed the fact that the religious leaders did not honor the word of God, but trumped it with tradition.

#### **Associates with Outcasts**

Jesus was insulted as a “friend of sinners.” What a great compliment!

#### **Trains His Disciples “On the Go”**

Jesus sent his disciples into situations that were “over their head” spiritually so they could learn to depend on him.

### **His Final Week**

#### **Weeps Over the City**

Even though he knew they would reject him, Jesus heart is moved with compassion.

#### **Confronts and Warns the Religious Establishment**

The gospels show that the deepest hate for Jesus (and therefore God) comes from the guardians of religion. Their religion violently rejected the one true God.

#### **Washes the Disciples' Feet, eats the Last Supper, & Encourages Them**

Even on the eve of facing the agony of the cross, Jesus remains others-centered and pours out his love for his disciples.

#### **Garden of Gethsemane**

Jesus' prays an astonishingly vulnerable prayer in asking the Father that he take away the overwhelming “cup” of his wrath. He also submits to it: “not my will, but yours be done.”

**Betrayal**

**Arrest**

**Denial**

**“Trials”**

**Scourging & Crucifixion**

**“Father forgive them”**

Jesus refuses to hate his Roman executioners and the Jewish mockers as he hangs from the cross.

**“My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”**

What sounds like a cry of confusion, is actually a quote from Ps. 22 that describes the symptoms of crucifixion.

Jesus really was being forsaken in that moment as he bore the judgment of God for the sins of the world.

**“It is Finished”**

Jesus is declaring that the sin debt is paid in full!

**“Into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit”**

**Temple Veil Torn**

This signaled that the barrier between God and humans had been removed by the work of Jesus.

**Burial, Sorrow & Doubt of the Disciples**

The disciples did not expect Jesus to die, and therefore were stunned by it. They wondered if they had made a mistake in following Jesus. None expected a resurrection.

**Resurrection**

Jesus appeared over 40 days to assure the disciples they were not hallucinating and to show them that His death was according to scripture.

**Commissions the Disciples**

Jesus commissioned the disciples to take His message out to all the earth.

**Gospels**

**Bible books:** *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*

**Timeline:** *The birth, life, death, & resurrection of Jesus.*

The Gospels describe what Jesus did while he was on the earth. They cover his birth, parts of his early youth, his 3-year public ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection - 4 B.C. to 33 A.D.

Between the Testaments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Last Old Testament book written</li> </ul>	400
Jesus' 1st Coming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The birth of Christ</li> <li>▪ Jesus begins his public ministry</li> <li>▪ Jesus' death &amp; resurrection</li> </ul>	4 B.C. 30 A.D. 33
The Church Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The birth of the Church</li> <li>▪ The gospel spreads</li> </ul>	33
Jesus' 2nd Coming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Jesus returns as King</li> <li>▪ Satan's rebellion destroyed</li> </ul>	? ? + 1000

## What is a gospel?

“**Gospel**” is a Greek term. It **means** “*good news*.” Each of the four Gospels tells the story of how God sent his son Jesus to die in our place.

The Gospels are a unique mixture of narrative and teachings, frequently employing “parables” – brief, engaging fictional stories that teach spiritual truths.

## Why are the Gospels important?

- **Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promises to *Abraham* and *David* (Matthew 1:1).**

The very first verse of the New Testament reads: “A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:” – Matthew 1:1

Matthew is eager to tell us that Jesus is a descendant of David and Abraham, men who each received important promises from God, promises that frame the story of the Old Testament. God promised David that one of his descendants would sit on his throne and rule the world forever. God promised Abraham that though one of his descendants, the whole world would be blessed. As the New Testament begins, we find out that both promises are fulfilled in one person, Jesus Christ.

- **Jesus is the *central figure* of the Bible (John 5:39; Luke 24:44).**

Everything we’ve studied so far, even though it was written centuries before Jesus ever lived, has been preparing the reader for the coming of Christ. Moving through the rest of the New Testament to the book of Revelation, everything will look back to the significance of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

Your study of the Old Testament will be richly rewarded when you read the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament. I’m excited that you’ve learned a little Old Testament over the last three weeks. Keep it up in your own study and you’ll read the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament with new eyes!

- **Jesus explains *who God is*.**

### John 1:14

The “word” (logos) mentioned in John 1:1-3 was “was with God and is God.” In 1:14 he takes on flesh and becomes a person! The Creator has entered his creation.

To see Jesus in action is to see God in action!

### **John 1:18**

By embodying God, Jesus “explained” Him in a way that previous revelation could not.

**John 14:9 Jesus replied, “Philip, don’t you even yet know who I am, even after all the time I have been with you? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father!”**

**(Robinson and Smith) “There has been a tendency for Christians to invite others into sacred space—sometimes seeker friendly sacred space. The incarnation was remarkable precisely because God in Christ invaded secular space.”<sup>1</sup>**

Jesus’ example challenges the church to “go and be,” and not simply ask the world to “come and see.”

The Gospels are tantalizing because they give us the best picture of what God is like. We see how God handles different situations, how he carries himself, what makes him happy, what angers him, who he hangs out with, how he spends his time.

**When you read the gospels try to ask these two questions:**

**What does this passage tell you about the character of God?**

*Example John 11:33*

At the grave of Lazarus Jesus was angry at death and He wept. This reveals that he sees death was an enemy and that death is profoundly abnormal. At the same time, He feels deep empathy for human pain and sorrow.

**What does this passage show you about God’s love for people?**

*Example: John 21:1-17*

Summarize the situation: The risen Jesus appears to the disciples, where he has a very personal interaction with Peter, who the last time he had seen Jesus, denied him with cursing. Now Jesus initiates a very uncomfortable conversation (for Peter) about whether Peter loves him. Jesus’ love is that way—he probes us to talk about the reality of our lives for our good. When we have failed, we would rather say, “I get it. Do we have to talk about this?” Jesus insists we do. In this little

---

<sup>1</sup> Martin Robinson and Dwight Smith, *Invading Secular Space* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Monarch Books, 2005), p. 12. Copyright 2007, *Xenos Christian Fellowship*

interaction, Peter is restored to leadership rather than coldly punished.  
This is God's love in action!

## Understanding the Gospels

- **Become familiar with the *structure, themes, and purpose* of each gospel.**

**See the handout titled: *Overview of the Four Gospels*.**

Compare Mark's shorter length with Matthew's longer, discourse-filled gospel. While Matthew contains large sections of Jesus' teaching, Mark has very little teaching. Instead, Mark narrates a fast-paced action narrative. Each has different readers and different pastoral concerns. Mark was writing to Christians suffering deadly persecution in Rome (thus his emphasis on Jesus as the suffering servant), while Matthew was helping Jewish Christians to teach their people "to obey all that I commanded you." (Matt. 28:20)

**The theme of Luke's Gospel: *Salvation***

**See Luke 19:10** "I came to seek and save that which was lost."

**See Luke 5:29-32** "Why do you eat and drink with such scum?"

Jesus is the Savior of the "outsider." (Samaritans, Gentiles, Tax-collectors and sinners, women)

- **Learn about Jesus' *world*.**

Knowing the culture, geography, and history of the time will help you understand the Gospels.

**See the handout titled: *The Gospels: Jesus' Supporting Cast***, which summarizes the major groups Jesus interacted with: Jews, Gentiles, religious authorities (Sadducees, Pharisees, Scribes), tax gatherers, Romans, Samaritans, etc.

For a great summary of the political, religious, and socioeconomic background of the Gospels, see **Craig L. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997) pp. 5-71.**

## Parables

Jesus uses a variety of methods to convey truths to his listeners. Parables are one of his favorite techniques.

**Definition:** *concrete examples and stories that demonstrate abstract truths.*

**Parables almost always make a single point and are designed to illicit a response.**

A good joke has a punch-line that catches you off guard. That's what makes you laugh. Like a joke, parables usually have a surprising twist that catches the listener's attention and evokes a response.

**Jesus' parables are “subversive” or revolutionary.**

“Subversive” means “to turn from beneath, to overturn or overthrow from the foundation: to *undermine*. It also connotes “dissident,” “rebellious.” Jesus was seeking to undermine the false assumptions of Pharisaic Judaism. He was “rebellious” in a good way because He wants to free people from legalistic bondage.

**He reverses expectations about wealthy, powerful, & religious people.  
He actively pursues those “outside the margins.”  
He calls us to “lose our self to find it.”**

**Jesus' parables undermine, challenge, threaten, weaken, & destabilize our personal agenda.**

As Jesus subverts our faulty agenda, this enables us to be subversive like Him. As a result, people that we interact with are “subverted” as we get to know them because our changed lives prompt them to reconsider the values of the American Dream.

**An example of a revolutionary parable:**

Luke 18:9-14 is a familiar parable to many readers—so much so that its revolutionary character is often missed. Jesus is taking a very respected person in Jewish society (the Pharisee) and contrasting him unfavorably with the most despised member of society (the tax collector). Today, to call a person a “Pharisee” is to cast a insult. We cheer the tax collector as the underdog. We like outsiders and rebels. Not so the original listeners. They could not have known until the end of the parable what Jesus was leading up to. His readers would have listened with approval as Jesus talked about the Pharisee praying. They would have been disgusted as Jesus talked about the tax collector. “He can beg for mercy all he wants. He's going to hell!” Only when Jesus said, “I tell you, this sinner, and not the other” would the punch line have hit them. That is why I read the parable to the class line by line, suggested the way the audience would have heard it before Jesus brought down the boom.

**“Jesus told this story to some who had great self-confidence and scorned everyone else: ‘Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a dishonest tax collector. The proud Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: “I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else, especially like that tax collector over there! For I never cheat, I don't sin, I don't commit adultery, I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.” But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, “O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.” I**

**tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For the proud will be humbled, but the humble will be honored.” – Luke 18:9-14**

**What point is Jesus making in this parable?**

*God honors humility, not works-righteousness*

**How to benefit from reading a parable: Luke 15:1-32**

**Read 15:1,2**

**Who was the parable addressed to?** The disciples? The crowds? Jesus’ critics?

*The religious leaders*

**What attitude is Jesus is speaking to?**

*Avoidance of the “despicable”*

**Read 15:3-10**

**What is the emphasis?**

*The finding of the lost brings great joy to God*

**Read 15:11-32**

**Learn what you can about the historical and cultural setting of your passage. Don’t assume your associations are the same as the original listeners!**

*Pharisees (religious leaders) were respected*

*Rebellious sons were not glorified*

“To ask one’s father for one’s share of the inheritance early was unheard of in antiquity; in effect, one would thereby say, “Father, I wish you were already dead.” Such a statement would not go over well even today, and in a society stressing obedience to one’s father it would be a serious act of rebellion (Deut 21:18–21) for which the father could have beaten him or worse. That the father grants the request means that most of the hearers will not identify with the father in this parable; from the start, they would think of him as stupidly lax to pamper such an immoral son.” --Keener, Craig S., *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press) 1997.

**Don’t lose the main point by trying to attach significance to every detail.**

*Stay focused on the “lost and found” theme (3, 8, 24, 31), NOT what the famine meant, etc.*

### **Clues to finding the main point:**

#### **What part of the parable would have shocked this audience?**

*The father’s compassion (it would have seemed like softness).*

*That Jesus made the older brother the “bad” guy, since he was just focused on justice for himself (as the Pharisees were).*

#### **Does Jesus explain the point of the parable at the end?**

Indirectly: the finding of the lost brings great joy to God because they are of great value to him. *The Pharisees should celebrate*

### **Applying the main point**

We often avoid people we don’t know and who are different than us.

We could value lost people like Jesus by spending time with them and learning to celebrate when they are found.

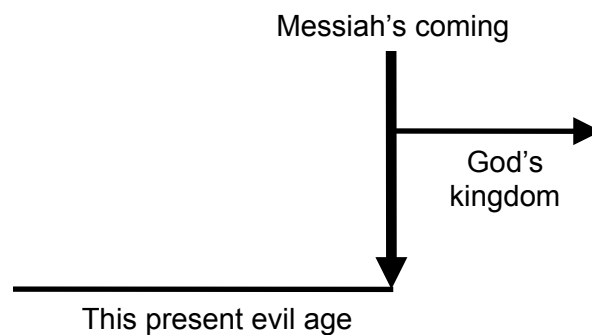
### **Understand Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom of God.**

The Kingdom of God was a central message in Jesus’ ministry.

**“Jesus traveled throughout Galilee teaching in the synagogues, preaching everywhere the Good News about the Kingdom” – Matthew 4:23**

Understanding this concept will help you correctly interpret the Gospels.

#### **The Jews’ view of the kingdom of God:**



“this present evil age” – Since Adam and Eve chose to live independently from God, humanity lives in what the Apostle Paul calls “this present evil age,” a time dominated by rebellion and evil.

“God’s kingdom” – God is in control of history and one day, he will replace the present evil age with his own eternal kingdom. Then, wickedness will be judged and righteousness will reign.

“Messiah’s coming” – The event that separates the present evil age and God’s kingdom is the coming of the Messiah. The arrival of the Messiah is the fulfillment of God’s promise to David that one day, one of his descendants would rule the world. The Messiah will crush all of God’s enemies and be exalted above all other authorities (Psalm 89).

See also Daniel 2:44 and 7:13,14

The Jews’ view of the kingdom of God was accurate, but *incomplete*.

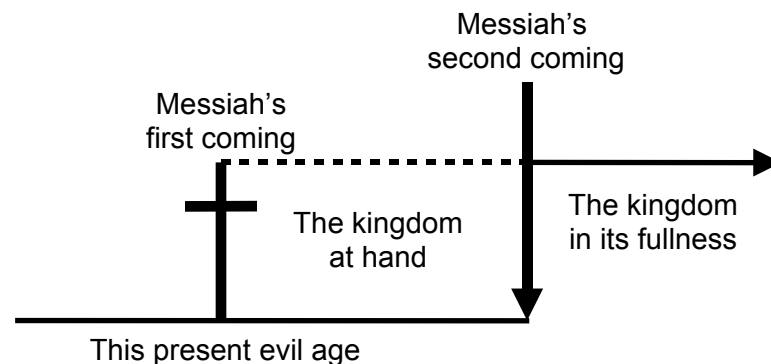
### Jesus and the “Kingdom at hand”:

Jesus opened his ministry by saying, “the kingdom of God is at hand.”

**“And after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’” – Mark 1:14,15**

You can imagine why his audience would be excited to hear this! They expected that Jesus would soon start a political revolution and overthrow their Roman oppressors.

Unlike the kingdom the Jews expected, however, Jesus went on to describe an unseen phase of the kingdom, what we will call the “kingdom at hand”:



Jesus affirmed the Jews’ picture — but he added some crucial additional information about the coming of Messiah and the establishment of God's kingdom.

- What the Old Testament prophets called the coming of Messiah is actually his Second Coming.
- Prior to that time, Messiah would come—not as a reigning king but as Suffering Servant—to die for the guilt of a rebellious humanity whom God loves.

- The first coming of the Messiah would usher in an unanticipated form of God's kingdom, “the kingdom at hand,” that is different in important ways from the kingdom in its fullness.

Illustration: From WWII: D-Day in 1944 and VE (Victory in Europe) Day in 1945. While the war was not officially over until May of 1945 (VE Day), the D-Day invasion of June 6, 1944 struck a decisive blow to Hitler’s Fortress Europe. Victory was assured—it was just a matter of time. The same is true of Jesus’ work on the cross—a decisive blow to Satan. Yet, the final victory is not until Jesus returns. We live in the “already-not yet tension.”

**The kingdom parables: contrasting “the kingdom at hand” with “the kingdom in its fullness”**

Jesus described this phase of the kingdom in a series of parables in Matthew 13. Each is designed to contrast the kingdom at hand with the kingdom in its fullness.

**Matthew 13:24-30**

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. But that night as everyone slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat. When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew. The farmer’s servants came and told him, ‘Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds!’ ‘“An enemy has done it!’ the farmer exclaimed. “‘Shall we pull out the weeds?’ they asked. ‘He replied, ‘No, you’ll hurt the wheat if you do. Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds and burn them and to put the wheat in the barn.’”

<b>The Kingdom at hand</b>	<b>The Kingdom in its fullness</b>
<i>The righteous &amp; the unrighteous will live together in the same world.</i>	<i>God will separate the righteous and the unrighteous.</i>

**Why didn’t the disciples “get it?”**

**“He said to them, ‘The Son of Man is going to be betrayed. He will be killed, but three days later he will rise from the dead.’ But they didn’t understand what he was saying, and they were afraid to ask him what he meant.” – Mark 9:31,32**

*It required a complete paradigm shift.*

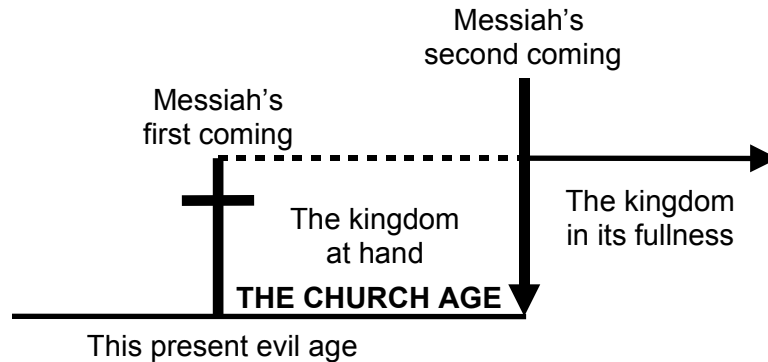
Understanding the kingdom in this way required a complete paradigm shift on the part of the disciples. They couldn’t let go of the idea that Jesus would

immediately bring kingdom in its fullness. That's why the disciples never seem to understand Jesus when he tells them he first must die

See also Luke 24:44,45.

### **Between the Kingdoms: The "Church Age"**

This period of history where "the kingdom at hand" gradually grows is also known as "The Church Age" – the period of history we live in!



Review each description of the kingdom at hand for yourself and you'll see that it is a good description of what it's like to serve God today. Who is the manifestation of the Kingdom of God today? It's us! Through Jesus teaching on "the kingdom at hand," then, we learn about how God's kingdom is at work in the world today, and about how we can benefit from and cooperate with his activity.

### **What is God's strategy in the Church Age?**

*Going to all the nations* (those same nations that God spoke about the Abraham in Gen. 12:3) and making disciples of them.

**Matt. 24:14**

**Matt. 28:18-20**

### **The fundamental application of the kingdom of God is to:**

*Humbly bow to the King*

**Matt. 6:10, 33**

Choose to put God at the center—make Him Priority #1!

What is your "center"?

Sports? Stuff? Self? Comfort and the feeling of happiness?

“Seek *first* the kingdom of God” (6:33)

“If you put first things first, you get second things thrown in. If you put second things first, you lose both first and second things.” --C.S. Lewis

## **Acts**

**Timeline:** 33 – 60 A.D.

### **Key events:**

**Acts provides an account of how Jesus guided the growth of the early church through the Holy Spirit.**

- **Jesus ascends to heaven.**
- **Birth of the church at the day of Pentecost.**
- **Rapid growth of the early church.**
- **Counter-attack by God’s enemy: persecution, hypocrisy, division.**
- **Gospel spreads to the Samaritans and Gentiles.**
- **Paul’s conversion.**
- **Paul’s missionary journeys.**
- **Paul’s imprisonment and journey to Rome.**

There is no time for this tonight. We’ll take a closer look at this book in Unit 2 of Christian Ministry.

### **Assignment:**

- **Continue following the reading plan in the *Bible Reading Assignment*.**