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Title: "The Beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God" – Part 1
Text: Mark 1:1; Luke 24:25-27; Gen. 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:19, 20; Eph. 1:4
Theme: The Gospel story begins before this old world was formed and will continue well beyond the new world's creation.

How will they best hear?

- Use the imagery of a puzzle.
- Put together a pen and its various pieces.

Various objects have multiple parts and those individual parts play a distinct role in making the BIG PICTURE knowable. In the absence of the BIG PICTURE, the parts almost become unknowable.

Before we begin let us consider four simple questions.

Questions:

1. How important is it to know where you are going when you begin a trip?
2. How important is it to know what the completed puzzle looks like before you start putting it together?
3. Does God have a singular intent for creation and biblical revelation?
4. How does the singular purpose of God impact your life on a daily basis?

The purpose of this study is for us to see that the gospel story began in eternity past within the purposing of the God, and that creation and biblical revelation are the telling of this one story.

To Know: God has a singular end and means to that end. All of life contributes to the redemptive means of God for the complete and ultimately glorification of Himself.

To Choose: God desires for each of us to surrender ourselves to this redemptive purpose by ordering our thoughts and choices around Him.

To Feel: There is great peace and joy knowing that God is fulfilling His redemptive purpose in the world even when our feelings and circumstances would tell us otherwise.

Its Eternal Necessity:

All of creation and biblical revelation points to the centrality of Jesus Christ in all things. What we perhaps miss is the centrality of Jesus Christ in the culmination of all things. Please note with me Ephesians 1:10.

⁹ "He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ¹⁰ with a view to an administration suitable **to the fullness of the times**, that is, **the summing up of all things in Christ**, things in the heavens and things on the earth" (Eph. 1:9, 10).

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To miss Jesus Christ as the whole is to miss Him in the “pieces” of life. For that to happen is detrimental to one’s spiritual walk and spiritual destiny.

The Present Danger:

In a pragmatic culture, we often fail to see how “Jesus Christ works.” Our pragmatism wants Him to solve our parenting problems, our employment issues, and our marital conflict when what He does is much bigger than these things. He is capable of causing peace to exist in the context of complete anarchy, and He will one day completely overthrow all injustice. What we consistently fail to see is the centrality of Jesus Christ as to His person and work for every aspect of creation and biblical revelation.

Introduction:

In the movement of God for our fellowship, corporately and individual, it is appropriate that I feel impressed by the Holy Spirit to lead us in a study of Mark’s Gospel as it coincides with the approaching Advent Season on the Church’s Religious Calendar.

I believe we would profit by a short explanation of what the idea of Advent means for the church.

The word **Advent** means "coming" or "arrival." The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ in his First Advent, and the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his Second Advent. Thus, Advent is far more than simply marking a 2,000 year old event in history. **It is celebrating a truth about God, the revelation of God in Christ whereby all of creation might be reconciled to God.** That is a process in which we now participate, and the consummation of which we anticipate.

In this double focus on past and future, Advent also symbolizes the spiritual journey of individuals and a congregation, as they affirm that **Christ has come, that He is present in the world today, and that He will come again in power.** That acknowledgment provides a basis for Kingdom ethics, for holy living arising from a profound sense that we live "between the times" and are called to be faithful stewards of what is entrusted to us as God’s people. So, as the church celebrates God’s in-breaking into history in the Incarnation, and anticipates a future consummation to that history for which "all creation is groaning awaiting its redemption," it also confesses its own responsibility as a people commissioned to "love the Lord your God with all your heart" and to "love your neighbor as yourself."

The Spirit of Advent

Advent is marked by a spirit of **expectation, of anticipation, of preparation, of longing.** There is a yearning for deliverance from the evils of the world, first expressed by Israelite slaves in Egypt as they cried out from their bitter

oppression. It is the cry of those who have experienced the tyranny of injustice in a world under the curse of sin, and yet who have hope of deliverance by a God who has heard the cries of oppressed slaves and brought deliverance!

[Do you not “taste and see” the sting of sin and death every day of your life? Are there not apparent injustices unfolding around you circumstantially? Are you not wishing for deliverance from this fallen world? Advent calls us to live with expectancy in a fallen world for the full and final installment of God’s promise to bring hope, healing, and wholeness to all who are distraught, diseased, and dysfunctional.]

It is that hope, however faint at times, and that God, however distant He sometimes seems, which brings to the world the anticipation of a King who will rule with truth, justice, and righteousness over His people and in His creation. It is that hope that once anticipated, and now anticipates anew, the reign of an Anointed One, a Messiah, who will bring peace, justice, and righteousness to the world.

Part of the expectation also anticipates a judgment on sin and a calling of the world to accountability before God.

[Hence, we call the unbelieving to remember and believe the One whom the Father has sent, His only-begotten Son whose coming in flesh, dying on the cross, and rising from the dead secures for them life from death.]

The season of Advent [is] celebrated [as a time] of expectation or anticipation. [Advent equally longs for deliverance] from the systemic evil of the world expressed in evil empires and tyrants. It is in that sense that all creation groans for its redemption as we witness the evil that so dominates our world (Rom 8:18-25).

[Even today as we hear of “wars and rumors of wars” we long for the day of full deliverance and immediate justice by the One who alone rules righteously.]

[It is for this reason] Advent is celebrated as a time of joy and happiness as we await the coming of the King.

It is only as we experience that full cycle, beginning with unbridled joy in Advent that slowly fades into the realization of what we have done with and to the Christ, that the awful reality of Good Friday can have its full impact. And in that realization we can finally be ready to hear the Good News on Resurrection Sunday! That is the journey that the disciples took. And so there is value in taking the same journey beginning with the anticipation and joy of Advent!

So, we celebrate with gladness the great promise in the Advent, yet knowing that there is also a somber tone as the theme of threat is added to the theme of

promise. This is reflected in some of the Scripture readings for Advent, in which there is a strong prophetic tone of accountability and judgment on sin. But this is also faithful to the role of the Coming King who comes to rule, save, and judge the world.

Because of the dual themes of threat and promise, Advent is a time of preparation that is marked by prayer. [Such prayers are marked by] humble devotion and commitment, prayers of submission, prayers for deliverance, prayers from those walking in darkness who are awaiting and anticipating a great light (Isa. 9).

The spirit of Advent is expressed well in the parable of the bridesmaids who are anxiously awaiting the coming of the Bridegroom (Matt 25:1-13). There is profound joy at the Bridegroom's expected coming. And yet a warning of the need for preparation echoes through the parable. But even then, the prayer of Advent is still:

Come, O Come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel!

<http://www.cresourcei.org/cyadvent.html>

It is in keeping with the theme of Advent that we consider the Gospel of Mark.

I. Understanding the BIG PICTURE

ILLUSTRATION:

Most of us have a shared experience in that we misplace something and look for the object high and low only to find it lying in plain sight. Somehow in our frantic pursuit we overlook the obvious. The same is true in the study of the Scripture.

We can bury ourselves so deeply in an aspect of truth that we fail to see the larger picture. Sometimes it is said, "you are so close to the trees that you cannot see the forest." Our intent in this study is to pull back and see the larger, grandeur picture of God's singular and redemptive purpose.

- A. The goal of God is glory driven and this goal is primarily achieved through the mediation of the second member, Jesus Christ.

The idea is simple. Jesus Christ is the focus of the Tri-unity of God in order that They might bring glory to Themselves. Because of this, biblical revelation is Christo-centric.

"It is my deep conviction that **every part of the Bible is given its fullest meaning by the saving work of Christ**, who restores a sinful, fallen creation and makes all things new (preface). A short summary of the chapter directs our attention to the idea of **the kingdom of God as a central and unifying theme of the Bible** (11). What went before

Christ in the Old Testament, as well as what comes after him, **finds its meaning in him** (50)." (Graeme Goldsworthy, According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible, IVP, 1991).

What follows is a sampling of how Christ is the ground and goal of everything in the Old Testament. Let this litany of Christ's pervasive presence make you marvel at Him and look for Him everywhere.

- Christ upholds all things (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). Therefore, all Old Testament events are possible because of Christ.
- Christ created all things (John 1:3, 10; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). Therefore, all that exists in the Old Testament is because of Christ.
- Christ is one with God (John 10:30; 17:11, 22). Therefore, all that God does in the Old Testament Christ is involved in doing.
- All things were created for Christ (Col. 1:16). Therefore, all people, things, customs, nature, and events in the Old Testament are for the glory of Christ.
- Christ is the end and goal of the law for righteousness to all who believe (Rom. 10:4; Gal. 3:24). Therefore, all Old Testament commands lead to Christ for righteousness.
- Christ was speaking through the Old Testament writers (1 Pet. 1:10-12). Therefore, all the Old Testament is the word of Christ.
- All treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ (Col. 2:3). Therefore, all Old Testament wisdom finds complete expression in Christ, the one who is wiser than Solomon (Matt. 12:41), who surpassed all the kings of the earth in wisdom (1 Kings 10:23).
- Christ is the final high priest (Heb. 1:3; 2:17, 18; 3:1; 4:14, 15; 5:5-10; 6:20-8:1-2, 6; 9:11, 12, 24; 10:11-14; 10:21). Therefore, all the atoning action of priests in the Old Testament is fulfilled through Christ and their atoning work is ended in him.
- Christ is himself the final atoning sacrifice (Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:12-14, 25-26, 28; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; 1 John 2:2; 4:10;). Therefore, all Old Testament sacrifices lead to him and end in him.
- Christ is greater than the temple (Matt. 12:6; John 1:14; 2:18-22; Col. 2:9). Therefore, he is "where" we meet and have fellowship with God and see his glory.
- Christ is greater than Jonah (Matt. 12:41). Therefore, all the miracles of the prophets are surpassed in Christ's Jonah-like miracle of death and resurrection.
- Christ is preeminent in all things (Col. 1:18; 3:11). Therefore, all greatness in the Old Testament points to and is surpassed by Christ's greatness.

Not only is creation and revelation Christ-centered, but this relates both to His person and to His redemptive work.

- B. The purposing of God in redemption began before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:19, 20; Eph. 1:4).

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¹⁹ “but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.
²⁰ For He was foreknown **before the foundation of the world**, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you” (1 Pet. 1:19, 20).

“just as He chose us in Him **before the foundation of the world**, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love” (Eph. 1:4).

The intent of my thoughts is not to prove a doctrine of election, but to show how God’s redemptive purposes preceded the formation of the world. Before God created the universe, He was already thinking redemption.

C. All of creation and all of biblical revelation move the redemptive purpose of God forward (Ps. 19:1-3; Luke 24:25-27).

¹ “**The heavens are telling of the glory of God**; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. ² Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. ³ There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard” (Ps. 19:1-3).

²⁵ “And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” ²⁷ **Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets**, He explained to them **the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures**” (Luke 24:25-27).

“Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45).

The study of creation and revelation is to be Christo-centric. Creation and revelation has meaning only as they are sourced in and flow from Christ. Creation and revelation when studied apart from Christ are hollow and a distraction.

“The Bible is one book. Had we to give that book a title, we might with justice call it ‘The Book of the Coming Kingdom of God.’ That is, indeed, its central theme everywhere. In approving this affirmation we are not forgetting the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. For *He* is the King eternal, and there could be no final Kingdom apart from Him and His work as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Alva J. McClain, The Greatness of the Kingdom, c1968, 4, 5).

Perhaps today’s tragedy is that we have made creation and revelation stand alone studies, and in so doing have unknowingly divided the body of Christ.

We fail to see Christ in creation and in biblical revelation. Instead of seeing Him center stage we see Him as a supporting cast member. Jesus Christ is the essence of biblical revelation and creation.

D. This idea is supported by Genesis 3:15, 12:1-3, and Galatians 3:16.

“And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And **between your seed and her seed**; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel” (Gen. 3:15).

¹“Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; ²And **I will make you a great nation**, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; ³And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen. 12:1-3).

“Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as referring to many, but rather to one, ‘And **to your seed, that is, Christ**” (Gal. 3:16).

This idea is not supporting any other idea. All other ideas are supporting this idea.

The idea of Christ, His person and work, is the sun around which all things in this galaxy rotate. It is the gravitational pull of this Son that pulls all other objects into alignment.

This is “His story.” Although you and I have a limited and finite understanding of history, our immediate experiences, and the future, I believe to understand any of it properly it must be understood from a Christological-redemptive purpose.

E. The Gospel of Mark is *about* Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mark 1:1)

“The **beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ**, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1).

What we are about to study is a piece of this much larger picture. For us to miss Mark’s account of the story would do a tremendous disservice to the whole. What God began before the foundation of the world, what He stated in Genesis 3:15, and promised in Genesis 12:2 is being fulfilled in Mark 1:1.

“In Jesus you meet a King better than king David, one who speaks words with more authority than the prophets, and one who offers sacrifice superior to the priests.”
<http://www.iamnext.com/spirituality/bibletour4.html>

In our next study we will begin focusing in on the Gospels as a whole and the Gospel of Mark in particular as to their distinct role in the story. However, it is in light of this initial idea that I would like us to begin to understand the relationship that does exist between the Old and New Testaments.

II. The Relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

The Old Testament or Old Covenant, is a part of God's redemptive purpose revealed under different historical circumstances and cultures.

A. Old Testament **preparation** (39 books [Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39])

Here, I will follow our English order and not the Hebrew order.

1. 5 Law
2. 12 History
3. 5 Poetry
4. 5 Major Prophets
5. 12 Minor Prophets

The biblical revelation from Genesis to Malachi is an announcement of God's unfolding purpose. This purpose or intent began before the foundation of the world was poured. All of creation and all of biblical revelation are proclaiming this story. It is for this reason we call "History, His story."

B. New Testament.

By its very name the New Testament or New Covenant suggests that something "new" has arrived in contrast to something that is "old."

The New Testament is a uniquely designed book. It consists of 27 books with 9 different authors and 1 theme written over a period of 40 years. Why is this possible? Because of inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21)

1. Gospels - **introduction** (Luke 1:1-4; John 20:30-31) "Gospel" means good news (1 Cor. 15:1-4). There are four gospels. The first three are called synoptic (to see alike), and the last one, John, is uniquely different from the other three.

"A mathematical comparison shows that 91 percent of Mark's Gospel is contained in Matthew, while 53 percent of Mark is found in Luke." (NIV Study Bible, 1829).

"Mark has 661 verses; Matthew has 1,068 verses; Luke has 1,149 verses. Of Mark's 661 verses, Matthew reproduces no fewer than 606 [and] Luke reproduces 320. of the 55 verses of Mark which Matthew does not reproduce 31 are found in Luke. So the result is that there are only 24 verses in Mark which do not occur somewhere in Matthew and Luke. This makes it look very like as if Matthew and Luke were using Mark as the basis of their gospels." (William Barclay, The Gospel of Mark, DSBS, [Westminster John Knox Press, 1975], 2)

The Gospels as literature were written during the period of the book of Acts.

2. Acts: **proclamation/expansion** (Acts 1:8) Could be entitled acts of the Holy Spirit. Actual history of the early church.
3. Epistles: **explanation/instruction** agnoeo -
4. "ignorant"/instruction. 21 times in the Greek New Testament, 17 times in Epistles (Rom. 1:13; 6:3; 1 Cor. 10:1, 2; 2 Cor. 2:11) There are 13 Pauline epistles; 7 general epistles.

Most of Paul's letters were written during the period of the book of Acts.

5. Revelation: **consummation/culmination**. Revelation was written by the Apostle John who also wrote the Gospel of John and the 3 epistles. Revelation tells us the end of the story. He wins.

APPLICATION: (What's the NEXT STEP? Let us leave with 5 practical thoughts.)

1. As fractured as your life may appear, it is a part of God's overarching purpose and it is a part of the means to the mission of God. As you live your life learn to ask yourself the question, "What part does this moment have in the redemptive purpose of God?"
2. Start thinking redemption. Who do you know that needs Jesus as their Savior?
3. Read your Bible believing all of the parts have one singular purpose. As you read your Bible learn to ask yourself the question, "What part does this portion have in the redemptive purpose of God?" Make sure you are looking at the BIG PICTURE as you look at the various pieces.
4. Look at creation as having a redemptive purpose. As you view God's creative activity learn to ask yourself the question, "What part does this portion of my life have in the redemptive purpose of God?"
5. It is my prayer that you will see and experience the joy of God that is in Christ Jesus in the midst of your chaotic existence.