

God's Story A.D. – Part 2

Today is the last message in our series titled – God's Story

Covered a lot of ground in a short amount of time; But we're not finished

There are 3 time periods remaining – 3 pieces of the **puzzle** if you will . . .

In order to complete the picture and get a full overview of the Bible

I mentioned last week that we only had one more time period after the Life of Christ

But the more I thought about it – I couldn't leave out the future just because it's future

I tend to think of a story as something that's already happened, but in God's Story, the future is as sure as the past; and it's the best part of the story

With that in mind, let's turn in our Bibles to Mt 28

Timeline – available; helpful; \$4; take advantage of it; spend a half hour with it

That said, the next time period following the life of Christ is the time period we currently find ourselves in, the . . .

Church Age (30AD-present)

Started with Pentecost 50 days after Christ's resurrection

Pentecost was a celebration marking the beginning of the wheat harvest

But on that occasion, it was the day that God sent his Spirit to mark the beginning of the soul harvest, the church

Those were great days – with people coming to Christ by the thousands

But the more the apostles preached, the more the persecution increased

Much of which was led by a devout Jew named Saul, who was converted on the road to Damascus through a miraculous encounter with the risen Christ (~34AD)

Later called Paul, he went on to become the greatest missionary the world has ever seen, preaching the Word to the Gentiles, and writing about half of the NT

It was his preaching to the Gentiles that led to quite a stir among Jewish believers . . .

Some of them believed, needed to keep the Law in order to be truly accepted by God

- All of which came to a head in AD50 at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)
Where the apostles and elders of the Jerusalem church decided that Gentiles need not fulfill the Law in order to be saved
Confirming that we are saved by grace, through faith, not works

About a decade later, Paul was imprisoned for his preaching – final days in Rome

Meanwhile, back in Jer, the Jews once again revolted against the Romans in 66AD . . .

Which was a big deal because most of the Christians fled the city to avoid repercussions

- Which came in AD70 when the Roman armies crushed the rebellion, leveled the temple, and destroyed the city, just like the Bab's 650 years earlier
It was the 9/11 of their day 10x over

Significant to us because it tells us that the NT (with the exception of Rev) was written and distributed well before AD70, due to its *silence* on such an earth-shattering event

If it was written *after* AD70, would have been unthinkable to leave such an event out

So this key date/event helps to confirm the early writing of the NT – by those alive at the time, within a few decades of the events they record

- From that point on, the “official” church ebbed and flowed with the political and religious powers of the day, until the Protestant Reformation in the early 1500's
Martin Luther broke from the teachings/traditions of the Catholic church, emphasizing a return to Scripture as our sole rule for faith/life

Adding fuel to that fire at about the same time, was the invention of the printing press and translation of the Bible into the common languages

Both of which put the Bible into the hands of the masses for the first time ever

That brings us to the present, where, if you've committed your life to Christ, you're a part of God's ongoing story . . .

And bear the responsibility, like those who have gone before us . . .

To spread the word (Mt 28:19-20)

That's one of God's purposes in the Church Age – to spread the Word; the gospel; the Good News of Jesus Christ

He was explicit about it in Mt 28:19-20

Combined with the fact that we are ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor 5) . . .

We are not only entrusted with the content of the message, but the responsibility to *spread* it as well

Were it not for the fact that *it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes*
We'd be in trouble – but we're not, because it is

- I was reminded of that so vividly last week when 30-some people came forward to receive Christ
I've been reveling in that all week, and can't stop talking about it
Reminded that the gospel is powerful; it's compelling (Nathan's comment)
If we spread it, God will use it

One of the best ways to spread the word is to bring someone to church

That's often where personal evangelism starts – with a simple invitation to church

It doesn't matter which Sunday, or what is being preached

If their hearts are soft, God will do the work – just bring them

- Just heard someone say recently that we're in danger these days of getting so good at leadership, so good at ministry, and so good at method . . .
That we no longer have to “resort” to evangelism to fill our churches
We no longer have to preach the gospel
We no longer have to tell them they're sinners and need a Savior
We no longer have to challenge their falsely held beliefs

If that's the case, God help us

If we bring people to church, but fail to bring them to a crisis of faith – we just as well not bring them at all

Because giving someone a false sense of security when they're heading for a cliff, is not a loving thing to do

- Next Sunday, like last Sunday – I'm going to preach a simple gospel message, and give people another opp to respond
Which means it's another golden opp for you to invite someone, and spread the word

It's one of God's purposes in the age of the church

To make disciples (Mt 28:19-20)

Let me give you 3 quick aspects of a disciple

1. Followers of Christ – who publicly identify with him in baptism
2. Learners – who observe all that God commands in the Scriptures
Who *conduct* their lives in relationship with Jesus, just as they *surrendered* their lives to receive him
Col 2:6 – *As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him*
3. Workers – who roll up their sleeves and join God where he's at work

Eph 2:10 – *We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

God didn't save you to coast; He saved you to work

To do some things that he prepared ahead of time, just for you

Which means we better . . .

Our Lesson: Get to work

This book was never meant to be a textbook, a theology book

It was meant to be a *workbook*

A workbook that you study to *apply*, not just study to know

Getting that backwards is one of the biggest pitfalls of mature believers

Sometimes I'll hear someone say – “we need to go deeper”

Other than not knowing what in the world that means . . .

I've found that statement comes most from those who work the least

Those who are least involved in the lives of the least of these

Those who are the least involved in personal evangelism

Oh, they may be extremely involved inside these walls

But they've lost perspective outside of them

In doing so, the Bible has become a textbook to know, rather than a workbook to apply

Don't waste the life God has given you to accomplish his good works, because you've got your head in a book

Get to work, and do so with passion

Titus 2:14 – [Christ] *gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

God died to save you, clean you, keep you, and make you *passionate* for good works

If you're not working for Christ – it's time to get to work

If you are, and you're not passionate about it, it's time to change your attitude

Used to say when I was trading that when it was busy/crazy – would have worked for free

I was so passionate about it, I would have done it just for the thrill – I didn't care about the money, or the reward, and certainly not the fatigue

That's the way it should be in our work for Christ – we should be so zealous for good works that we expend ourselves to do them, without regard for the reward or the cost

That's the church age, that ends with the Great Tribulation and leads to the next time period in God's Story, the . . .

Millennium (in the future)

Don't know a lot about the M; What we do know comes primarily from Rev 20

Key Players – Christ, Satan, Believers, Unbelievers (everybody)

Key Places – Earth, Lake of Fire

M starts with the return of Christ, the binding of Satan

And continues with his physical reign on earth, for a thousand years

That's one of God's purposes in this time period . . .

To reign in peace, over all the earth (Rev 20:6)

Rev 20:6

First resurrection – resurrection of believers when Christ returns

Second death – the final judgment and punishment of unbelievers

Priests of God – with direct access to God (all believers, now and then)

As a result of the Great Tribulation and the triumph of God over his enemies, peace and prosperity will prevail over all the earth under the benevolent reign of Christ

His second purpose in the M is . . .

To finish Satan's defeat (Rev 20:10)

After being released for a time near the end of the M, he is loosed for one final battle

During which he's defeated and thrown into the Lake of Fire forever

Rev 20:10

Immediately following that is the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11-12) where –

We must all appear . . . so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (2 Cor 5:10)

Call it a third purpose of the M – to judge all mankind

Rev 20 says that the unsaved will be judged – and found lacking

The saved will be judged – and found written in the book of life, despite their lack

And that makes all the difference

Rev 20:15 – *If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

There's no avoiding the Great White Throne Judgment – it's coming

And when it does, there's no second chance, no extra credit, and no appeal process

You're either ready or you're not

Our Lesson: Get ready

Having just given several examples of readiness . . .

Jesus says in **Mt 24:44** – *You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*

We need to get ready for Christ's return at the start of the M, and Christ's judgment at the end of it

The only way to do that is to put your faith and trust in Jesus to *save* your life

Then living for him the *rest* of your life

It means training yourself for godliness; And resting in his grace

Time is short and eternity is long

So get ready *now*, before it's too late

And make the most of the life God has given you

That's the M, starting with the return of Christ, and ending with the Great White Throne

Judgment – all of which leads to the destruction of the heavens and earth, and the . . .

Eternal State (in the future, lasting forever)

17th and final time period in God's Story

And fortunately, it never ends

Rev 21:1-2

V9-10 indicate that this New Jerusalem is the church; the bride of Christ

Described in all her beauty and glory

And set in the context of a new earth, where we will dwell with God forever

That's the primary purpose of God in this eternal state . . .

To be with us, face to face, forever (Rev 21:3)

Rev 21:3

The eternal state is the culmination of God's entire story

It's the last chapter, intended to fulfill all God's promises

It's a time and place where he will love and bless us . . .

We will worship and enjoy him – forever

Now we see dimly, but then, face to face

Now we know in part, then we will know fully

That's something to look forward to

Something to get excited about

Get to work; Get ready; and . . .

Our Lesson: Get excited

We've been given a glimpse of the future, and it's so awesome, it's hard to imagine

As good as you may have it now – the best is yet to come

As bad as you may have it now – you can expect far better

Do you realize what the future holds?

1 Cor 2:9-10 says – *No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what*

God has prepared for those who love him

And yet, these things God has revealed to us – to those who know and love him

That's something to get excited about

That God has prepared an eternal state for those who love him – that is so good, we

can't even imagine it

It's the end of God's story that never ends

To help you get your mind and heart around it, *beginning* to end – **video**

Don't blink . . .

Past, present, and future – that's God's story

As followers of Christ, part of God's family – we're a part of it

That's something to get excited about