

God's Plan in the Gospels

July 14, 2013

The past several weeks we have been studying **God's Plan in the Scripture**. This has simply been the tag line for a study in the plot line of the Bible.

- There is a sense in which the plot line of the Bible can be described in one word ... Jesus.
 - o So when you are asked what the Bible is about by a person who understands nothing about the Bible you can say ...
 - o In one sense, the Bible is a book about one person – Jesus.

But if you have additional time, then you are able to say that the plot line of the Bible can be summarized in three words ...

- Creation (God made the world.. and He did it in 6 literal 24 hour days) ...
- Fall (Man chose to reject the counsel that God gave him and sin and death entered the world) ...
- Redemption (God made provisions and covenants so that human beings could be in a right relationship with God) ...

Throughout the OT ... from the calling of Abraham back in Genesis 12 to Isaac and then Jacob. We see the establishment of God's people based on the redemption of God. But over and over and over again the people break their covenant with God.

- A few weeks after the Exodus from Egypt, the nation breaks covenant with God,
- To the time of the judges, God's people break his covenant,
- To the times of the kings and prophets (like no king lived up to the standard in the Word), God's people break his covenant
- To even the people who returned from the exile after spending 70 years thinking about it continued to break his covenant.

Let me push the pause button for just a minute (all this is on page 1 of my notes ... on the website ... I bet you can download them right now if you want) ...

- Parents ... what I have just covered would be a fantastic milkshake question ... I realize not all of you are as addicted to ice cream as I am.
 - o Most Sunday afternoon discussions at lunch revolve around the milkshake question. It is an age appropriate question based on the study of the Word on Sunday morning.
 - o So here is a great one ... Will you please explain the plot line of the Bible focusing on the OT?
- Singles ... the next time someone asks you to go on a date. Say, well, I would really like to go with you, but before I can commit, Will you please explain the plot line of the Bible focusing on the OT?
- Point man group / ladies Bible study ... Here is one of your accountability questions ... Will you please explain the plot line of the Bible focusing on the OT?

Back to the flow ... So the end of the OT is somewhat discouraging. When will this all be set right?

- When will the promised one come who will crush the head of the serpent?

- When will the Moses like prophet come?
- When will the servant of Isaiah appear?
- When will one come who will take away the sin of the world?

Who is that person? Jesus ... Who? And he will do all those things because Jesus is Awesome!

- Notice that you can't say "awesome" in some lame fashion. You got to put some heart into it. Jesus is AWESOME. You try ...
- Brent was tapping into his feminine side last week by talking about the Disney princesses and the cute blonde from Kansas. So let me tap into the Disney theme and remind you of the hamster in Bolt ... who cares about the dog, the hamster is the best character in the movie ... and he knows how to say Awesome ... check it out (1:09-1:23 ... Bolt ... they need a hero).
 - o If you know the movie, Rhino the Hamster loves the word Awesome.

After you remember to print page 1 of my notes so you can answer the plot line question, earn your milkshake, arrange your date, nail the accountability question and most importantly ... remember this: Jesus is AWESOME.

Our task this morning is to study **God's plan in the Gospels**. The gospels are Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

As you read through the gospels there are a few things that hit you right away...

1. All four gospels spend their time and attention talking about Jesus including some of the exact same stories (the feeding of the 5,000 for example occurs in every gospel). This is especially true of Matthew, Mark, and Luke where the overlap of material is particularly prominent.
2. All four gospels are very selective in what they include. In other words, even after you combine Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John you only have about 50 days of Jesus' life (some scholars put that number at less than 30).
 - a. Not only that, but almost 25% of all gospel material discusses the final week beginning with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to his resurrection.
 - b. John makes this point explicit in **John 20:30 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book.**
 - c. So what God gave us is not everything Jesus ever said or did (a life of Christ if you will). Rather, God gave us the material he wanted us to have.
3. All four gospels are written with a purpose in mind and all four purposes are closely related, and yet slightly different. It is these purposes that are going to show why Jesus is so AWESOME.

With the time I have remaining I am going to show you four reasons that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John explain that Jesus is awesome. I am so stoked about this. Are you ready?

I. Jesus is AWESOME because he is the Fulfillment of Scriptural Promises of a Coming King (Matthew)

Of the four gospels, Matthew is most concerned to show that the promises of the OT concerning the coming king were perfectly wrapped up in the person of Jesus.

- Outside of Hebrews, Matthew quotes and references the OT more than any other NT book.
- Let's consider just a small sampling that shows this kingly aspect of Jesus.

Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew 1:1, that is on page 1 of the back section in your Bible called the New Testament.

A. Jesus is royalty

The very first verse of Matthew says Jesus is the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. What? In the first 20 words of the gospel Matthew wants his readers to understand that Jesus is the promised one ... the one we have been waiting for.

- He is royalty. In the line of David and Abraham.
 - o In a subtle fashion Matthew sets up the reality that the promise of blessing to Abraham would come in the person and work of Jesus.
 - o In a subtle fashion Matthew explains that it is Jesus who will be the one who reigns on the throne of David.

The covenants to Abraham and to David (both of which we have discussed in earlier messages) are going to be fulfilled and made complete in and by Jesus because he is royalty.

- Jesus is going to the king they never had.
- The one who is perfectly righteous and thus can sit on the throne of David forever.

Just in case we missed the subtlety of Matthew 1:1, look at Matthew 2:1-5 for there the point is made explicitly.

- Herod, the king of the Jews, and all Jerusalem was stirred up by this group of foreigners.
- But this idea was already foretold. In the book of Micah (Brent spoke briefly about Micah last week), there was a promise that a RULER would come from Bethlehem that would Shepherd Israel.
 - o They all saw it. Jesus was the promised ruler, king from the OT that would fulfill the promises to Abraham and to David.

While this point is not made from the OT, we could even make the case of Jesus' kingship by the little sign hung by the Romans on the cross of Jesus. It said, "The KING of the Jews."

Not only is Jesus royalty in fulfillment of the Scripture but ...

B. Jesus is born of a virgin

Look at Matthew 1:23. This OT quotation creates a link between Jesus and Isaiah that is unmistakable. Jesus, in one form or another, is related to sign given 700 years before to the prophet Isaiah and the people of Israel.

- Now the birth of Jesus is set apart from all other births for was not conceived in the normal fashion.

- Jesus is not simply a human being, but also divine. Thus, he was able to live a sinless life to serve as a perfect king ... something no one else could do.

C. Jesus returns from Egypt

As we keep reading in the text we learn that Herod is angry that the foreigners have not returned to him. So God warns Joseph and sends the family to Egypt. Read Matthew 2:14.

- After Herod executes the children of Bethlehem, a reference to the OT in its own right, Jesus returns to Israel with the link back to Hosea that out of Egypt God has called his son.

D. The mission of John the Baptist

In chapter 3 we begin to learn of another guy, one who will proclaim the greatness of King Jesus whose name is John the Baptist. Even his arrival has something to do with predictions given in both Isaiah and in Malachi. Read Matthew 3:1-3.

We are barely two chapters into the book and we have OT reference after reference after reference showing us that Jesus is the king – the promised Messiah.

E. Jesus brings sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and freedom to those who are captive

I can't cover all that this entails, but Isaiah predicts a servant who do signs and wonders giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, freedom to those who are captive (which is demon possession in the gospels). All this demonstrates that the words Jesus speaks and the words of the OT that Jesus fulfills are true.

Even the final week...

F. Jesus is put to death in fulfillment of the Scripture

Reading the crucifixion narrative in Matthew 26-28 causes our minds to drift back to Isaiah 53 ... it pleased the Lord to crush him. Even Judas' betrayal has links back to the OT.

Why is Jesus Awesome?

- Matthew answers that question by explaining that he is the coming king promised in the Scripture.

So we need to think about how this answer from Matthew should impact our lives. To say it another way ...

Am I living my life as if Jesus is the King?
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- Young people --- does the way you treat your parents display the fact that you understand and believe that Jesus is King? [Are you happily keeping your room clean, taking out the trash, and using your summer to do things that would be productive?]
 - o Does your choice of friends or people you allow to influence you make it obvious that you understand Jesus is King?

- Does your choice of music demonstrate to others around you that you really believe that Jesus is King?
- College students and young adults --- Does the fact that Jesus is the King make a difference in the people who are interested in dating? ... Why not look for someone that lives like Jesus is really the king of their life???
- Husbands / wives --- Does Jesus being King make a difference in the way you treat your spouse?
 - Would you respond so tersely and short with your spouse if Jesus were there.
- If you are a parent does Jesus being king impact the way you treat your kids? The way you train them? The way you prepare them for life?

So, Matthew shows that Jesus is the promised, coming King. Mark also believe that Jesus is Awesome, but while agreeing with Matthew would put his focus on a different matter.

II. Jesus is AWESOME because he is the Suffering Servant come to Ransom You and Me (Mark)

It should come as no surprise that suffering is an element discussed in every gospel just as kingship is discussed in every gospel.

- However, just as Matthew emphasized the kingship concept and the fulfillment of Scripture, Mark emphasizes Jesus as the suffering servant in a special way.

It is possible to divide the book of Mark into two sections with 8:27-8:30 forming the hinge between them. The first section answers the question, Who is Jesus? That answer culminates in the confession of Peter who says ...

Mark 8:27-29 Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, “Who do people say that I am?” 28 They told Him, saying, “John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; but others, one of the prophets.” 29 And He *continued* by questioning them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered and said to Him, “You are the Christ.”

Once we have the identity of Jesus nailed down, we see suffering coming to forefront. For the next three chapters of Mark, there is a clear structure.

Please turn over to Mark 8:31, that is on page . (Work out the Units)

Unit #1	Passion Prediction (8:31)	Disciples' reaction (8:32-33)	Discipleship Lessons
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suffering - Death - Rise Again 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rebuke 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Followers of Jesus deny themselves and take up their cross (8:34-38) (b) Cost and hope of discipleship (9:1-13) (c) Dependence on God through prayer (9:14-29)

Unit #2	Passion Prediction (9:30-31) - Suffering - Death - Rise Again	Disciples' Reaction (9:32) - Confusion	Discipleship Lessons (a) The Greatest is the greatest servant (9:33-37) (b) Disciples must be characterized by humility (9:38-50) (c) Disciples fulfill God's plan for marriage (10:1-12) -- Problem of self interest (d) Disciples understand they enter empty handed (10:13-31)— Problem of Self Achievement
Unit #3	Passion Prediction (10:32-34) - Suffering - Death - Rise Again	Disciples' Reaction (10:35-41) - Request for honor	Discipleship Lessons (a) Importance of Servanthood (10:42-45) (b) Importance of Following Jesus (10:46-52)

These observations not only show the fact that each unit contains the same 3 elements, but more importantly there are some general comments that can be made even without looking at the individual units particularly.

- (1) All 3 passion predictions contain the same 3 basic elements (a) suffer; (b) kill; and (c) rise from the dead. Of course the prediction in 10:32-34 explains the “suffering” in much more detail.
- (2) The disciples’ reaction each time demonstrates that they still have not fully understood. The reactions are (a) rebuke; (b) confusion; and (c) request for places of honor.
- (3) While the discipleship lessons are varied each “set” of discipleship lessons begins with a radical call to servanthood. While it may be saying too much to argue that “servanthood” is the essence of discipleship it is worth noting the repetitious element in such a short span of gospel writing.

Included in this passage is Mark 10:45 which says, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

Mark proceeds in chapter 11 to explain the Triumphal Entry, his last supper, his death, burial, and resurrection. All of this fulfills Jesus mission to be the suffering servant.

Mark’s message then has a number of application points for us. I want you to consider two.

1. Do we appreciate what Christ did for us? Do we see the significance of his suffering, his suffering which ransomed us? Are we thankful for what Jesus did and do we discipline

our thoughts and minds in order to spend much of our mental energy on that truth. Does it cause our hearts to sing praises to God? Does it encourage our hearts and shape our attitudes?

- Friends, here is a little tip. You talk to you more than anyone else does, which means that in many ways you are a more powerful influence on your life than anyone else.
 - So when your boss really irritates you, what do you tell yourself? When your spouse frustrates you, what do you tell yourself? When your parents or your children do something that embarrasses you, what do you tell yourself?
 - Here are the options ... you can focus on what Mark says ...
 - Jesus is the suffering servant who gave his life for me. Thus, what I have is far more than I deserve.
 - So, I need to evaluate this situation more clearly ... maybe I need to take a step of growth and my irritation has to do with my pride.
 - Maybe my boss, husband, wife, child, parent is wrong and I need to learn how to live in unity with people who frustrate me.
2. Do we act like the disciples who want the prime seats, who want to ignore the cross we are supposed to carry, and miss the example set by Christ?
- It was interesting that the first discipleship lesson in each section of Mark was somehow related to the notion of service. Each of us have to evaluate that in our own minds. Each of us could look at our calendar and find out where we are in terms of service.
 - If you can say that your calendar was full of serving opportunities than praise God for that.
 - If your calendar was more closely tied to activities here, there, and all over then maybe these discipleship lessons need to have a more active role on your schedule.

Why is Jesus Awesome? Mark explains that he is awesome because he is the suffering servant. That brings us to the writings of Luke

III. Jesus is AWESOME because we can be confident in Jesus' story (Luke)

That sounds a little different than the other points so let me explain. Luke 1:3-4 gives Luke's purpose in writing.

Luke 1:1-4 - Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, 3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; 4 so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

- He wanted the facts on the table
- He wanted to organize the account in a particular fashion

- For the PURPOSE of us being CONFIDENT in his story. So that we would know the exact truth about Jesus.

I liken to this ... have you ever heard a person tell a story and you were just not sure whether to believe it or not.

- A few years ago we were playing a get to know you game in our YC ABF. We understand that it is hard to build relationships in a corporate worship service and so we spend some time each week attempting to find ways to get to know one another. This particular day we had to write down something about us and then the rest of us had to guess who it was.
- Someone wrote down, "I tackled Adrian Peterson." For you non-football fans he was a star running back at Oklahoma and has also had some great years in the Pros (he is like 6'2" and weighs about 220). All the guys in the room start looking around and thinking ... who on earth tackled Adrian Peterson? Someone is messing with us. This is not a true story.
- Well, it turned out to be true, a guy in our class played against him in High School. But there was still some hesitancy. We were wondering if the note should have said, "I got run over by Adrian Peterson." We still had doubts. But here is when we believed his story ... when he said "he and 6 other teammates actually tackled Peterson." Okay, now I'm buying it.

This is essentially what Luke does. People had heard about Jesus by word of mouth (Luke was written in the 60s and Jesus died in the thirties). So for 30 years people were passing along the stories of Jesus. Luke writes to say this ... "You know all those stories you have heard." I am going to lay out for you the story of Jesus so that you can be confident that someone is not trying to pull a fast one on you.

- For in those same 30 years there were other stories circulated.
- Stories that the disciples stole the body of Jesus ... he was never raised.
- Thus, Luke's gospel helped them have discernment about what was true and what stories were false.

Luke writes so you and I would have that same confidence. That is why Luke organizes his writing so differently than the others.

- Matthew wants to show Jesus as the fulfillment of Scripture not that he went here and did this. Sometimes Matthew is not even chronological.
- Mark wants to show Jesus as the suffering servant so there are all kinds of things that Mark left out.
- John, as we will see, has his own purpose in mind. His book is really not chronological.
- But Luke is not simply after a theological agenda.
 - o He wants people to understand and have confidence that Jesus is who he said he is and that he has done all that he said he would do.

Again, the implications are profound.

- The gospel of Luke can help us when we struggle with doubt. Some of you may never experience that. Others of you know the pain and challenge that comes from doubt. The gospel of Luke can help reassure that your beliefs are right.
- The gospel of Luke also helps you organize your own thoughts about Jesus. It helps you think about the steps he walked, the people he met, the opposition he faced, and the miracles he did.
 - o I liken it to this ... Many Christians want to go to Israel in order to walk the steps of Jesus. To see the sites where he was and to imagine listening to Jesus teach on the hillside. Indeed, that would be exciting. If you don't have that opportunity, then you can do so in the pages of Luke.
 - You can picture his birth in Bethlehem
 - Imagine going to the temple and seeing Joseph and Mary offering their sacrifice and hearing Jesus cry from the circumcision that indicated he was part of the people of God.
 - As John is preaching you imagine Jesus walking up and the touching scene that ensues at his baptism.
 - You imagine walking in the wilderness with Jesus, feeling his thirst and agonizing with the hunger. You hear his answers to Satan himself.
 - You follow him through Galilee and journey with him as he slowly but surely makes his way to Jerusalem.
 - You are there for the excitement of the triumphal entry and you reel as the Romans begin the process of death.
 - You marvel and rejoice as you walk into the empty tomb and you are captivated with Jesus as he shows how all the Scripture points to him on the road to Emmaus.

Luke gives you a tour of the steps of Jesus. All it takes is the gospel of Luke, the internet for some pictures and some time and you will have your own journey through Israel with Jesus and Luke is your tour guide. What you leave with is confidence that the story is, in fact, true.

One more gospel writer needs to have the opportunity to speak to this subject. John's answer is ...

IV. Jesus is AWESOME because He is the way, the truth, and the Life (John).

My wording comes from John 14:6, a message that he gives us disciples. But the primary purpose statement in the gospel of John is actually found in

John 20:30-31 Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

The whole book of John is organized around this crucial concept. John is particularly writing to deal with people who simply want to add Jesus to the list of things they already have going.

Many of you have seen the “coexist” T-shirts. They are decorated with symbols from various religious groups.

- On the one hand, the shirt is fine. We can live in a peaceful way with people who don't agree with us. Just because someone is a Buddhist or a Hindu that does not make them our enemy. In fact, we are commanded to love them.
- On the other hand, the shirt's value is not absolute for biblical Christianity is an exclusive religion.
 - o It is not that a person just adds Jesus to whatever they already have going and each is given equal weight.
 - o For John, he teaches that devotion to Jesus is by its very nature is a lack of devotion to other things.

Like the other gospel writers, John presents Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, the one who was promised. John, like the other gospels presents Jesus as the Son of God but that information is directed to one primary goal ... that the reader of John would believe that Jesus is exactly who he says he is and that by trusting in Jesus the reader will have eternal life.

So the miracles of

- Jesus turned water into wine
- Healing of the Nobleman's son
- Healing of the man at the pool in Bethesda
- Feeding of the 5,000
- Walking on Water
- Healing of the blind man
- Raising of Lazarus from the dead

Are recorded to prove that Jesus is the Messiah. These miracles authenticate his message. But John goes on to record a series of I am statements

- I am the good shepherd
- I am bread of life
- I am the light of the world
- I am the resurrection and the life

These show that satisfaction from our sin problem only comes from Jesus.

- He is the only one that can bring light where there is darkness
- He is the only one who can properly care for the sheep
- He is the one with the words to sustain life
- He is the one with the power to raise people from the dead.

So, for some of you ... here is the key point for the gospel of John.

- It is time to commit. It is time to reach a decision. It is time to stop investigating and time to make a choice. Jesus offers freedom from your sin. Jesus offers eternal life in heaven with him. Jesus offers life in the here and now that is abundant in the sense that

you, by his grace and help, are able to live joyfully in a sin cursed and sometimes hard world.

- I want to encourage you to consider making that decision today. You can admit your sin and the fact that one of the realities of the OT is that you can never ever be good enough for God – ever. So you need a deliverer, a savior, a redeemer. You cannot earn it. You have to trust in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
- The Bible puts it this way, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved.
- If you are a Christian already, then the gospel of John applies in the same ways I have already mentioned.
 - There is a confidence that comes from John. A growing belief. There is a sense in which your belief (by reading John) can be strengthened as you understand your savior even better which encourages you to love him even more.

Summary and Closing (not on ppt)

I have said quite a bit and I have covered a wide range of material. So let me bring it all together.

Jesus is AWESOME!

- Each gospel writer explains that Jesus is awesome in a slightly different way.
 - For Matthew, Jesus is promised coming King.
 - For Mark, Jesus is the suffering servant.
 - For Luke, Jesus' story can be relied upon.
 - For John, Jesus is the only path to eternal life in heaven.

All of these answers, in one way or another begin to deal with problems left open as we concluded the OT.

- When is Messiah coming ... He is Here!
- When will the one come to crush the head of the serpent ... He is Here!
- When will the Moses like prophet come ... He is Here!
- When will the servant of Isaiah come ... He is Here!
- When will the one come who will give his life as the once for all sacrifice ... He is Here!

So let's ensure ...

- Our confidence is in Christ
- We appreciate what Jesus has done for us
- We live as if Jesus is our King
- We serve him in all our lives

After all, Jesus is AWESOME!