

40 Days of the Bible #6:

## **The Jesus Explosion**

Galatians 4:4

November 6, 2005

Well, this is the last formal week of the 40 days of the Bible campaign this fall. Now we have two more weeks, two "post" weeks, in which we'll be emphasizing the application of the word of the in our own lives and the teaching of the Bible to others. **God puts the word in our hearts and lives so that we can share it, with all its transforming power, to others.** So in two weeks, I'll be asking you to take a step in discipleship. Some of you need and want to enter into a one-to-one discipleship relationship with another person leading you. And some of you need to be challenged to be discipleship mentors, leading others in that one-to-one relationship for a set period of time. But that's a few weeks away.

My objective today is to finish the idea we've been pursuing the last several weeks: what's the Bible all about? We started by looking at the importance of the Bible and what we mean when we say that the Bible is inspired. Then we looked at the "basic pattern" of the Bible: creation, fall and redemption. Then George Wood helped us with the Old Testament with the Walk Thru the Bible/Old Testament Seminar. Then we built a bridge from the Old to the New Testament last week as we looked at the Abraham-Christ connection. This week we see how the story of the Bible is completed and fulfilled in what I've called the Jesus explosion.

The Jesus explosion! A few years ago, for the Summer Bible Institute, I did a weeklong

seminar on Jesus and Judaism, and one of the things that struck me when I did that was how incomplete the Old Testament is without the New. It's like the headless horsemen of Icabod Crane fame. The Old Testament without the New is like a launching pad with a rocket. It's all preparation with no delivery.

In Galatians 4:4-5, Paul writes about how the coming of Jesus completes the story:

*4But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*

I want to give you simple mental image—or more likely, a series of mental images that will help you understand what the New Testament is all about. And the simple image I can put before you is this: an explosion. Call it the Jesus explosion.

You see, for a long, long time the work of God had been centered mostly on one small group of the people, the people of Israel, in one small place, the land of Israel, an area about the same space as that of the state of New Jersey or the Big Island of Hawaii. That's small, but God's heart is big. His plan was always to "go global" as we saw last week with the promises He made to Abraham: "and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3b)

For the best part of 2000 years, God worked with the little nation so that there would be one people on earth who knew that God is holy, that human beings are unholy sinners, and that we need a redeemer, a spiritual rescuer. Then He sent that Rescuer. At just the right time, God the Father sent God the Son to be that redeemer so that we can be part of God's forever family.

I want to focus on four parts of what Jesus did when He came:

1. He fulfilled all the promises started in the time of Israel
2. He made us part of God's family by paying the price of destroying the sin barrier by His death on the cross
3. He rose from the dead and gave us a "go global" message called the Great Commission
4. Finally, He's coming back to finish the work and to usher in an eternity of peace and joy

First,

### **He fulfilled all the promises started in the time of Israel**

Now this is really fascinating. Here's the basic idea: all the *promises* and the *patterns* of Israel were fulfilled the coming of Jesus.

Let me give you no less than seven quick examples of that:

1. The Son out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1, Matthew 2:15)

In Matthew 2:15, Matthew quotes Hosea 11:1: and says, "And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: Out of Egypt I called My Son." The interesting thing is that in Hosea, the "son" is clearly the nation of Israel. Now the first gospel takes that promise and sees it being *fulfilled* in Jesus Christ. This is a pattern you'll find all over the New Testament, but especially in Matthew's gospel.

2. The two Josephs and Egypt (Matthew 1-2)

This Israel/Jesus fulfillment theme is seen in something as trivial as the fact that both the

Old and New Testaments have a man named Joseph who have dreams and who go to Egypt!

3. The Red Sea and Baptism (1 Corinthians 10:2, Matthew 3:15)

Then when the people of Israel left Egypt, they were, in Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 10:2 "baptized" in the Red Sea. And when Jesus comes, He also is baptized, as Matthew 3:15 puts it, "to fulfill all righteousness." That was His "Red Sea crossing" into the will of His Father.

4. 40 years/40 days (Matthew 4:1-11)

Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years due to their disobedience. Jesus went to the desert for preparation—and to be tested—for 40 days.

5. The Servant of God (Isaiah 42:1-3; Matthew 12:17-20)

In Matthew 12:17-20, Matthew quotes Isaiah 42:1-3, which was originally about Israel, and again applies it to Jesus:

*17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:*

*18 "Here is my servant whom I have chosen,  
the one I love, in whom I delight;  
I will put my Spirit on him,  
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.*

*19 He will not quarrel or cry out;  
no one will hear his voice in the streets.*

*20 A bruised reed he will not break,  
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,  
till he leads justice to victory.*

*21 In his name the nations will put their hope."*

The "servant of the Lord" is no longer a nation, but a person, the Lord Jesus.

## 6. The True Vine (Psalm 80:8, John 15:5)

Here's another: In Psalm 80:8, Israel is compared to a vine: "You brought a vine out of Egypt..." And in John 15:5, what does Jesus say about Himself? "I am the True Vine." Again, He Himself is the fulfillment of the promises.

## 7. The firstborn (Exodus 4:22, Colossians 1:15)

One more: In Exodus 4:22, God calls Israel His firstborn. In Colossians 1:15, Paul calls Jesus the firstborn over all creation.

We could multiply examples for literally hours. The bottom line is this: in Jesus, we have the all the promises ever given to Israel fulfilled and completed. He in a sense reduplicates in His own life what a fully faithful Israel would have done. Get that—a **fully faithful** Israel?

Now what does God do in Jesus? Isaiah 49:6 says it all:

*"It is too small a thing for you to be **my servant** to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of **Israel** I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation **to the ends of the earth.**"*

Bang! That's the Jesus explosion. That brings us to the second part:

**He made us part of God's family by paying the price of destroying the sin barrier by His death on the cross**

Jesus came to die. At the center of the Bible's message is a cross, a cross that is stained with the blood of Jesus, the Son of God. The whole Old Testament leads up to it; the whole New

Testament proclaims it. Why do we always come back to the cross? Because the cross is the center point of the Bible, and all its truths are connected to the cross.

We are like Paul, who wrote to the Corinthians, "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2). Some people don't like the cross; there's a theologian I read who called the idea of the cross disgusting and called it "divine child abuse"—well, I can't help that. In Paul's time, many Jews rejected the cross because there was no way the Messiah should have to suffer. The Greeks thought it was foolishness. The Romans saw it as weakness. But it's God's wisdom, it's God's strength, to defeat sin and death from the inside. That's why Jesus died on the cross: to defeat sin and death from the inside.

### **He rose from the dead and gave us a "go global" message called the Great Commission**

Take your Bible and separate out the New Testament. Now divide the New Testament into two sections: the four gospels and the rest of the New Testament. That's the story of getting the message of Jesus out from Jerusalem to the world. You'll see that the gospels are just a little less than half of the New Testament. Acts, the letters and Revelation are more than half.

After Jesus rose from the dead, His top priority was to get His disciples ready for making the truth about Him known. It's so important that *all four gospels plus the book of Acts have a version of the Great Commission.* (See the references in your outline.)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:4-9.

And in fits and starts, that's what they did. Acts tells how they started in Jerusalem with all Jews, then to the half-Jew/half-Gentiles in Samaria, and then to the God-fearing Gentiles (Gentiles already sympathetic to Judaism) and then to totally pagan Gentiles in Antioch.

Within about 20 years, most Jesus-followers weren't Jews at all. The letters of Paul—the places they were written to—show that. We have Rome in Italy. Corinth, Philippi, and Thessalonica were in Greece. Galatia, Ephesus, and Colossae were in modern Turkey. The Jesus message, the Jesus explosion pushed outward.

Now listen carefully: the message they shared was both about a Person (Jesus) and a new way of living. Those went hand in hand. Historian Michael Green writes,

*...Christians stood out for their chastity, their hatred of cruelty, their civil obedience [and their] good citizenship...they did not expose infants, they did not swear. They refused to have anything to do with idolatry and its by-products. Such lives made a great impact. Even the heathen opponents of Christianity admitted as much.*

Jesus changed people; He still does.

In August, we were in Hawaii. One of the highlights was a day visit to Molokai. There's a place where you can look down on the beautiful peninsula where a 19<sup>th</sup> century Hawaiian King banished the lepers of Hawaii. Like most primitive societies, that was what you did with lepers.

It was a Christian, a Belgian priest named Father Damian, who went into the colony to work among the victims of what we now call Hansen's Disease. Like Jesus Himself, Damian

went into the place of pain and suffering and laid down his life for the afflicted.

Did you know that 95% of the population can't get leprosy? Only 1 in 20 can even catch it. Amazingly, Father Damien was in that 5%. After years of working among the lepers, he became one himself and eventually died on Molokai due to the complications of the disease.

That's the spirit of the whole story of the proclamation of the Jesus message in the New Testament: a **message** that is spoken, a call to **faith** in Him, which is accompanied by a **radically transformed, Christ-like** life. Not a little change, but a big one, where knowing and serving Jesus becomes the central point of our lives.

Now there's one more part of the New Testament message that we can't forget:

**He's coming back to finish the work and to usher in an eternity of peace and joy**

The return of Jesus is a message you'll find plastered all over the New Testament. Virtually every book mentions it, sometimes in great detail.

Now there are many ways of viewing the details of His return, and Christians don't all agree on those details. You have Amillennialists and Post-Millennialists and Pre-Millennialists. You have preterists, historicists, idealists and futurists—and a thousand variations thereof. The rock solid bottom line truth is this: *Jesus is coming back, to deliver His people and to judge the world, and to usher in and eternity of peace and joy.*

The last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, is devoted a "behind the scenes"

vision of the greatness of Jesus, His final deeds of justice and deliverance and the eternity we as His people will one day enter. I want to conclude by giving two compelling pictures from this last book of the Bible.

### **Picture One: The Go Global Vision is completed**

In Revelation 5:9-10, we're given a scene of heavenly worship, as the redeemed fall down before the Lord Jesus and praise Him with these words:

*9And they sang a new song:*

*"You are worthy to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,  
because you were slain,  
and with your blood you purchased men for  
God  
from every tribe and language and people and  
nation.*

*10You have made them to be a kingdom and  
priests to serve our God,  
and they will reign on the earth."*

That's one of my favorite passages in the whole Bible. It's the promise of the ultimate victory of Jesus, and His victory is that at the end, there will be gathered into the family of God people from every people group on earth. The Jesus explosion gets results! The whole world will hear the message, and while not all will believe, every single people group on earth will be represented at the foot of the throne of God. That cranks me up every time I think of it!

### **Picture Two: Eternal Joy**

For this, go over to the next to last chapter of the New Testament, in Revelation 21:1-4, at

the beginning of his vision of eternity, John writes,

*1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And 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. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

At the end, the creation itself is turned into the Temple, the dwelling of God.

No more death.  
No more mourning of crying or pain.  
An eternity filled with the light of the presence of God.

And we need to live with eternity in mind.

In Revelation 22:7, Jesus says, "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."

The story of the Bible is not something that's confined to the past. In a sense, we write daily and Second Book of Acts as we proclaim the message of Jesus and live the way of Jesus. And one day, Jesus will write the end of that story when He comes back.

Almost at the end of Revelation is an invitation—Revelation 22:17:

*17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is*

*thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*

I want to give you the same invitation to "come" today. You see, the Bible's message is for you. It's about how Jesus wants to make you part of the family of God. And if you don't know Him, what's the delay? The open arms of Jesus are **for you** today.

You need to establish a spiritual **BASE** with God. **BASE** stands for **believe, admit, switch** and **express**. Here's how. You need to...

**Believe God made me to love me and to live for his purposes.**

*"Long before God laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, and settled on us as the focus of his love." Ephesians 1:4 (Message)*

**Admit I've lived for myself, and then accept God's free forgiveness that was paid for by Jesus on the cross.**

*"Jesus personally carried the load of our sins in His own body when He died on the cross so we can be finished with sin and live a good life from now on." I Peter 2:24 (Living)*

**Switch to living for God's purposes in my life.**

*"Give yourselves to God...and surrender your whole being to Him to be used for righteous purposes." Romans 6:13 (TEV)*

**Express my desire for Jesus to be the Lord (leader) of my life.**

*"You will be saved, if you honestly say, 'Jesus is Lord,' and if you believe with all your heart that God raised Him from death." Romans 10:9 (CEV)*

**A simple prayer you can pray:**

**"Dear God, I don't understand it all yet, but I believe you love me and created me for yourself. I'm sorry that I've lived for myself instead of for you, and I ask for your forgiveness. Thank you for sending Jesus to redeem me, to pay for my sins. I want Jesus to be the Lord of my life. Please help me to learn to love you and trust you and live for your purposes."**

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