The Story Completed in Christ

Luke 24:44–49; Revelation 21:1–7; Revelation 22:1–5

Key Truth: The entire biblical story finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Through His death and resurrection, God has secured the redemption of His people and the ultimate restoration of His creation, bringing His original purpose to completion.

PART ONE: REVIEW — UNDERSTANDING GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PLAN
The major movements of God's redemptive story. The Bible is not a collection of disconnected stories. It is one unified account of God's purpose to redeem humanity and restore His creation through Jesus Christ.

1. The Bible: One Story, One Author; 2 Timothy 3:16–17
The Bible is the inspired Word of God. Though written by many human authors over centuries, it reveals one unified message and one central figure: Jesus Christ.

2. Creation: God's Good Design; Genesis 1–2
God created everything good. Humanity was made in His image for fellowship with Him and to exercise stewardship over His creation.

3. The Fall: Humanity's Rebellion; Genesis 3
Adam and Eve's disobedience introduced sin, death, suffering, and separation from God. Yet even in judgment, God promised a coming Redeemer (Genesis 3:15).

4. Abraham: The Promise of a People; Genesis 12:1–3
God established a covenant with Abraham, promising descendants, land, and blessing. Through Abraham's offspring, all nations would ultimately be blessed.

5. The Exodus: Redemption Through Deliverance; Exodus 12–14
God delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt. The Passover lamb and its blood provided a picture of the ultimate redemption Jesus would accomplish.

6. The Law and Tabernacle: God's Holiness and Presence; Exodus 19–25; Exodus 40. God revealed His holiness through the Law and established the Tabernacle as the place where He would dwell among His people. The sacrifices and priesthood pointed toward Christ.

7. The Kings: The Promise of an Eternal King; 2 Samuel 7:8–17
Israel's history revealed the failure of human leadership and the need for a perfect King. God promised David a descendant whose kingdom would endure forever.

8. The Prophets: The Promise of Restoration; Isaiah 53; Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 36:24–28. The prophets announced judgment but also promised a coming Messiah, a new covenant, forgiveness of sin, and the restoration of God's people.

9. The Messiah: Jesus Is the Fulfillment; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6–7; Micah 5:2
Jesus is the promised Redeemer, the Son of David, the suffering servant, and the King whose kingdom will never end. Everything in God's redemptive plan points toward Him.

The Entire Story in Four Movements

CREATION	God created everything good.
FALL	Humanity rebelled, bringing sin and death.
REDEMPTION	God sent Jesus to rescue humanity through His death and resurrection.
RESTORATION	God makes all things new and dwells with His people forever.

The central question of today's lesson is this: How does God's story finally conclude, and what does that conclusion reveal about His ultimate purpose?

PART TWO: THE STORY COMPLETED IN CHRIST

THE BEGINNING AND THE END BELONG TOGETHER

There is something remarkable about the way the Bible begins and ends. The Bible opens in Genesis with God creating the heavens and the earth. It closes in Revelation with God creating a new heaven and a new earth.

- In Genesis, we find a garden. In Revelation, we find a city-garden.
- In Genesis, humanity loses access to the tree of life. In Revelation, access to the tree of life is restored.
- In Genesis, sin brings a curse. In Revelation, the curse is removed.
- In Genesis, humanity is separated from God's presence. In Revelation, God dwells with His people forever.
- In Genesis, death enters the world. In Revelation, death is no more.

These are not coincidences. They demonstrate that God's redemptive plan has been moving toward a specific destination from the very beginning. **God's purpose was never simply to rescue people from a fallen world. His purpose was to redeem His people, restore His creation, and dwell with them forever.**

I. JESUS IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE ENTIRE STORY; Luke 24:44–49

These words occur after the resurrection of Jesus. He is meeting with His disciples and explaining the significance of everything that has happened. The disciples had witnessed His crucifixion. They had heard reports of the empty tomb. Some had encountered the resurrected Jesus. But they needed to understand how these events fit into God's larger plan. Jesus provides that understanding.

A. All Scripture Points to Jesus; Luke 24:44

Jesus identifies the three major divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures:

1. The Law of Moses.
2. The Prophets.
3. The Psalms and other writings.
    - His point is extraordinary: the entire Old Testament bears witness to Him. Consider the connections:

        - The promised offspring who would crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15).
        - The promised blessing to all nations through Abraham (Genesis 12:3).
        - The Passover lamb whose blood provided deliverance (Exodus 12).
        - The sacrifices that provided atonement for sin (Leviticus 16).
        - The promised King from David's line (2 Samuel 7).
        - The suffering servant who would bear the sins of many (Isaiah 53).
        - The promised new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–34).

    - All of these themes find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is not one story and the New Testament another. They are two major movements in one unfolding story of redemption.

    - **Important Principle:** We should never read the Old Testament as though Jesus suddenly appears in the New Testament. God's plan was always moving toward Christ.

B. The Cross and Resurrection Were Necessary; Luke 24:46

The cross was not an unexpected interruption in God's plan. It was not God's attempt to salvage something that had gone wrong. The suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus were central to God's redemptive purpose. Remember the problem introduced in Genesis 3:

- Sin separated humanity from God.
- Sin brought condemnation.
- Sin introduced death.
- Sin corrupted God's good creation.

Humanity needed more than another religious system or a better moral example. Humanity needed a Redeemer. Jesus came to accomplish what humanity could never accomplish for itself. At the cross, Jesus bore our sins. At the resurrection, He demonstrated His victory over death. Romans 5:18–19 explains that through the obedience of Jesus Christ, many will be made righteous.

Important Principle: The cross was not Plan B. The death and resurrection of Jesus were central to God's plan from the beginning.

C. The Gospel Must Be Proclaimed to All Nations; Luke 24:47–48

Notice the progression:

1. Christ suffers.
2. Christ rises from the dead.
3. Repentance and forgiveness are proclaimed.
4. The message goes to all nations.

Remember God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3: through him, all the families of the earth would be blessed. Now the risen Christ commissions His disciples to take the message of redemption to all nations. The gospel is not

limited to Israel. It is for the world. The Church has been entrusted with this mission.

D. The Holy Spirit Empowers God's People; Luke 24:49
The disciples were not sent to accomplish God's mission through their own strength. They were promised the power of the Holy Spirit. This promise was fulfilled at Pentecost in Acts 2. The Holy Spirit empowers the Church to bear witness to Jesus, proclaim the gospel, and make disciples.

We are living between Christ's resurrection and the final completion of God's redemptive plan. We have received the gospel, been entrusted with the gospel, and been empowered by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel. The story is not finished, but our mission is clear.

II. GOD WILL MAKE ALL THINGS NEW; Revelation 21:1–7

We now move from the resurrection of Jesus and the mission of the Church to the final destination of God's redemptive plan. John is given a vision of the new heaven and new earth. This is one of the most extraordinary passages in all of Scripture.

A. A New Heaven and a New Earth; Revelation 21:1

- The Bible begins with the creation of the heavens and earth. It ends with the creation of a new heaven and earth. The Greek word translated "new" is *kainos*, which often emphasizes something new in quality or character. This is important because our ultimate hope is not simply escaping the physical world. God's plan is the restoration of creation.
- Romans 8:19–23 describes creation as groaning and waiting for liberation from its bondage to decay.
- Revelation 21 shows the fulfillment of that expectation.
- God will establish a new creation in which sin, corruption, suffering, and death have no place.
- There are different theological views concerning the precise relationship between the present creation and the new creation. However, the central promise is unmistakable: God will establish a renewed order in which righteousness dwells and His purposes are completely fulfilled.

Key Takeaway: Christianity does not teach that God's ultimate purpose is to abandon His creation. God's ultimate purpose is to make all things new.

B. The New Jerusalem: God Dwells with His People; Revelation 21:2–3:
This is perhaps the most important theme connecting the entire Bible.

- Consider the progression:
  - **Genesis 1–2:** God creates humanity for fellowship with Him.
  - **Genesis 3:** Sin separates humanity from God's presence.
  - **Exodus 25:** God commands the Israelites to build a sanctuary so He can dwell among them.
  - **John 1:14:** The Word becomes flesh and makes His dwelling among us.
  - **1 Corinthians 3:16:** The Holy Spirit dwells within God's people.
  - **Revelation 21:** God dwells with His people forever.

- The Greek word translated "dwelling place" is *skēnē*, meaning tent or tabernacle. This deliberately recalls the Tabernacle in the wilderness. The God who once manifested His presence in the Tabernacle will dwell with His people in the fullness of His presence forever. Notice something else: the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God.
- The ultimate picture is not simply humanity escaping earth to live somewhere else. It is God bringing His dwelling into the restored creation. The goal of redemption is complete fellowship between God and His people.

Key Takeaway: The greatest purpose of redemption is not simply to get us out of hell and into heaven. It is to restore us to perfect fellowship with God.

C. Every Consequence of the Fall Will Be Reversed; Revelation 21:4
Think back to Genesis 3. The Fall introduced devastating consequences into God's creation. Now Revelation describes their complete removal.

Genesis 3: The Fall	**Revelation 21: Restoration**
Sin enters the world	Sin is defeated
Death enters humanity's experience	Death is no more
Pain and suffering increase	No more pain or mourning
Humanity is separated from God	God dwells with His people
Humanity is expelled from Eden	God's presence is restored
The ground is cursed	The curse is removed

Notice the completeness of God's restoration. He does not simply improve the circumstances of His people. He removes the very things that have characterized life in a fallen world. And notice the personal nature of this promise: "He will wipe every tear from their eyes."

This is not an impersonal act of cosmic restoration. The God who created us, pursued us, redeemed us, and sustained us will personally comfort His people. Every grief, every sorrow, every wound, and every painful consequence of living in a fallen world will be gone.

Key Takeaway: The final victory of Christ means that everything introduced by sin will ultimately be removed.

D. God Himself Declares: Everything Is Being Made New; Revelation 21:5
Notice what God does not say. He does not say, "I am making a few things better." He says, "I am making everything new!" This is the fulfillment of God's redemptive purpose. The same God who spoke creation into existence in Genesis now declares the completion of His restorative work. Notice that God is the one accomplishing this work. Our salvation began with God's initiative, was accomplished through Christ, is applied through the Holy Spirit, and will be brought to completion by God Himself. We do not create the new heavens and earth. We do not earn our way into them. We receive the inheritance God has promised.

E. The Inheritance Belongs to Those Who Overcome
Revelation 21:6–7 introduces two important ideas.

First, God declares: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End." God is sovereign over the entire story. He was there at the beginning, and He will be there at the end. His purposes cannot be defeated.

Second, verse 7 says: "Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children."

The word translated "victorious" or "overcomes" reflects the language used throughout Revelation to describe those who remain faithful to Christ. This is not teaching that we earn salvation through our own strength. Rather, those who belong to Christ are called to persevere in faith. God promises an inheritance to His children.

Notice the language of family: "I will be their God and they will be my children." This is covenant language reaching its ultimate fulfillment. God's purpose was always to have a people who belonged to Him and enjoyed His presence. Now that relationship is perfected forever.

Our hope is not based on the condition of the present world. We live in a fallen creation, but we serve a sovereign God who has promised to restore it. We can endure suffering, remain faithful, and live with confidence because our future is secure in Christ.

III. THE CURSE IS REMOVED AND GOD'S PRESENCE IS RESTORED; Rev. 22:1–5
John now provides a closer look at life in the new creation. The imagery is filled with deliberate connections to the opening chapters of Genesis. In many ways, Revelation 22 takes us back to the Garden of Eden, but with something greater: the curse is gone, God's people have been redeemed, and their fellowship with Him will never be interrupted again.

A. The River of the Water of Life; Revelation 22:1

Water is a powerful biblical image of life, provision, cleansing, and spiritual satisfaction. In the beginning, God provided water to sustain the garden. Now John sees a river flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. Notice where the river originates: the throne of God. Life in the new creation comes directly from God.

This imagery also connects with Ezekiel 47:1–12, where the prophet sees a river flowing from the Temple, bringing life and healing wherever it goes. Jesus also spoke of living water in John 4:10–14 and John 7:37–39. The source of eternal life is God Himself, and the Lamb is central to that provision. Notice that God and the Lamb share the throne. The Lamb who was slain is now reigning in glory.

Key Takeaway: Eternal life is not merely endless existence. It is life sustained by the presence and provision of God.

B. The Tree of Life Is Restored; Revelation 22:2
This is one of the clearest connections between Genesis and Revelation. In Genesis 2:9, God placed the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. After Adam and Eve sinned, they were expelled from the garden, and access to the tree of life was restricted (Genesis 3:22–24). Why? Because fallen humanity could not live forever in its sinful condition.

But now, in Revelation 22, the tree of life appears again. The restriction has been removed. The redeemed enjoy the life God intended from the beginning. Notice the abundance of the tree. It produces fruit continually, and its leaves are described as being for the healing of the nations. The picture is one of abundant life, complete provision, and the removal of the consequences of sin. This does not mean sickness and disease continue in eternity. Revelation 21:4 has already declared that pain and death are gone. Rather, the imagery communicates the completeness of the restoration and the wholeness of the nations.

Key Takeaway: What humanity lost through sin is restored through the redemptive work of Christ.

C. The Curse Is No More; Revelation 22:3
This is perhaps one of the most important statements in the entire passage. The Bible begins with a world under God's blessing. But Genesis 3 introduces the curse as a consequence of sin. The ground is cursed. Humanity experiences pain, struggle, and death. Fellowship with God is disrupted. Now Revelation declares that the curse is completely removed. Everything that sin brought into God's creation has been dealt with.

Consider the significance:

- No more rebellion against God.
- No more separation from God.
- No more death.
- No more suffering.
- No more corruption.
- No more curse.

The problem introduced in Genesis 3 has finally been resolved.

Key Takeaway: The work of Christ does not merely forgive the past. It secures a future in which sin and its consequences will never return.

D. God's Servants Will See His Face; Revelation 22:4
This statement takes us back to one of the deepest themes of the Bible: God's desire to dwell in relationship with His people. In the Old Testament, access to God's presence was restricted. Even Moses, who enjoyed an extraordinary relationship with God, was told that he could not see God's face and live in his mortal condition (Exodus 33:18–23).

The high priest entered the Most Holy Place only under specific conditions and at the appointed time.

Sin created a barrier between God and humanity. But now the redeemed will see His face. The relationship is fully restored.

They will also have His name on their foreheads. Throughout Revelation, the forehead imagery represents identity, ownership, and allegiance. God's people belong completely to Him. They are no longer separated from Him by sin. They are His, and they will enjoy His presence forever.

Key Takeaway: The greatest blessing of eternity is not the absence of suffering or the presence of wonderful things. It is the presence of God Himself.

E. They Will Reign Forever and Ever; Revelation 22:5
This brings us full circle to God's original purpose for humanity. In Genesis 1:26–28, God gave humanity dominion over His creation. Humanity was created to exercise responsible stewardship under God's authority. But sin corrupted that responsibility.

Now, in Revelation, God's redeemed people are restored to their intended role. They will reign with Him forever.

Notice the progression:

- Humanity was created to exercise dominion.
- Sin corrupted humanity's purpose.
- Christ came to redeem and restore humanity.
- God's people will ultimately reign with Him forever.

This is not humanity becoming independent rulers. It is redeemed humanity sharing in the reign of the King, under His authority and for His glory. The story that began with humanity entrusted with God's creation ends with redeemed humanity reigning with God in His restored creation.

Key Takeaway: God's redemptive plan restores humanity to the purpose for which it was originally created.

PART THREE: BRINGING THE ENTIRE STORY TOGETHER

Now let's step back and see the remarkable connections between the beginning and the ending of Scripture.

FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION

Genesis: The Beginning	Revelation: The Completion
God creates the heavens and earth (Genesis 1:1)	God creates a new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:1)
Humanity lives in a garden (Genesis 2:8–9)	God's people enjoy a restored garden-city (Revelation 22:1–2)

The tree of life is accessible (Genesis 2:9)	The tree of life is restored (Revelation 22:2)
Sin introduces the curse (Genesis 3:14–19)	The curse is removed (Revelation 22:3)
Humanity is separated from God's presence (Genesis 3:23–24)	God dwells with His people (Revelation 21:3)
Death enters the world (Genesis 3:19)	Death is no more (Revelation 21:4)
Humanity receives dominion over creation (Genesis 1:26–28)	The redeemed reign forever (Revelation 22:5)

The Bible is not simply a story that begins in Genesis and happens to end in Revelation. It is a story that moves from God's original creation, through humanity's rebellion and God's redemptive work, to the complete restoration of everything sin has corrupted.

The ending answers the problem introduced at the beginning.

FIVE TRUTHS TO REMEMBER

1. **The Bible is one unified story.** Every book contributes to God's unfolding revelation of His redemptive purpose.
2. **Jesus Christ is the center of that story.** He is the promised Redeemer, the perfect sacrifice, the risen Lord, and the coming King.
3. **The cross and resurrection are the turning point of history.** Through Jesus, the power of sin and death has been defeated.
4. **The Church has a mission in the present age.** We are called to proclaim the gospel, make disciples, and live as witnesses of the risen Christ.
5. **The story ends with restoration, not defeat.** God will make all things new, remove the curse, and dwell forever with His people.

PART FOUR: LIVING IN LIGHT OF THE COMPLETED STORY
Understanding God's redemptive plan should change the way we live.
This is not simply information to accumulate. It is truth that should shape our perspective, priorities, and daily walk with Christ.

1. We Can Trust God's Word
The Bible is not a collection of disconnected religious ideas. It is the unfolding revelation of God's plan. When we see how the promises, covenants, prophecies, and events of Scripture fit together in Christ, our confidence in God's Word should grow.
God has been faithful throughout history, and He will remain faithful until the end.

2. We Can Live with Hope in a Broken World
We are surrounded by suffering, injustice, sickness, death, and uncertainty. But Revelation reminds us that the present condition of the world is not its final condition. God has promised a future in which all things will be made new. Our hope is not wishful thinking. It is grounded in the finished work of Jesus and the faithfulness of God.

3. We Must Keep Christ at the Center
If the entire Bible points to Jesus, then He must remain central in our faith. He is not simply one part of our religious life. He is our Redeemer, Lord, King, and Savior. Our worship, obedience, relationships, priorities, and mission should all flow from our relationship with Him.

4. We Must Take the Gospel to the Nations
Jesus did not commission His disciples simply to enjoy the benefits of redemption. He commissioned them to proclaim repentance and forgiveness in His name. We are part of that same mission. The story of redemption is the message the world needs to hear.

5. We Should Live with Eternity in View
When we understand where history is going, it changes how we live today. We do not live merely for temporary comfort, possessions, recognition, or success. We live for the King whose kingdom will never end. Our present faithfulness matters because our future is secure in Him.

CONCLUSION: THE STORY WAS ALWAYS ABOUT JESUS

- The Bible begins with God creating the heavens and the earth.
- It reveals humanity's rebellion and the entrance of sin and death.
- It records God's promises, covenants, deliverance, Law, kings, and prophets.
- It announces the coming Messiah.
- It reveals Jesus Christ, who came to redeem humanity through His death and resurrection.
- It establishes the Church to proclaim that redemption to the nations.
- And it concludes with the promise that God will make all things new.
- The story that began in the Garden of Eden ends with God's redeemed people enjoying His presence forever.

From Genesis to Revelation, it has always been about God's redemptive plan in Christ.
And that is the story completed.