



THE STORY OF *Everything* LUKE 24:27

There's something quite fascinating about old family photo albums. Turning the pages, it is amazing to walk through time and see pictures of our parents and grandparents when they still had hair, when the fashions were so strange, when the hair-dos were so wild.

When I was a child, I loved to go and pull out the family albums from my dad's shelves. There's something not quite the same when we see pictures online as when they're in an album. The paper feels older. The photos have that grainy quality. And we get a sense that our lives are part of something much bigger than ourselves.

When we see our lives in the context of space and time, our family suddenly looks different. Did dad really lose that much hair? Did I really wear those funny sweaters? Still, we look at the photos and realize that we lived in a particular place and a particular time. We see the photos of great grandparents or ancestors we never met and we realize that our life flashes before us. And those photos put us in space and time and give us a sense of belonging.

The same is true when we come to the Bible. It gives us a smattering of pictures and stories. And if we're not careful, we can make the same mistake as when we look at our own family photos – we can think that the story is all about us. We can read the Bible and get the idea that we, like Israel, have some leaven in our homes that we need to remove. We can think that we need to follow David's example and slay the giants in our life. We can think that we need to get out of the boat and follow Jesus. And suddenly every story is about us.

But the pictures in the photo album aren't all about you. And neither are the stories in the Bible. Nor are they a loose collection of random stories that show you heroes you should follow or examples you should emulate. Rather, these stories are deliberately strung together – not as random pearls on a necklace, but as a history of God's redemptive work to remind you that there is only one person who matters in the story, and that's not you.

On the main stage, there are many minor characters. There are people who are the supporting cast. And they appear for a brief moment and then are gone from the storyline. It would be strange to see a minor character show up and think that the whole story revolves around someone who is only in one scene. Yet that is how we treat our story and our place in God's redemption. God cares about every player in the skit, but there is only one major character – and you aren't it. And the sooner we realize that we aren't the point of the entire story, the better off we are.

So what is the main point of the Bible if it isn't you and me?

See the Mystery Revealed

Paul tells us that God sent Christ as the plan to reveal the mystery of his will, a plan that is still being worked out. This means that the Bible is revealing Christ in all of his glory to us. It means that the Bible isn't a bunch of random stories that were stuck together without logic and flow. The Bible isn't first and foremost an instruction manual – Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth (B.I.B.L.E.). The Bible is a message that tells us the freedom that comes through Christ's rescue mission. Every story, every account, every law, every piece of wisdom literature reveals his great plan of redemption!



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Jesus is the true and better Adam who passed the test in the garden – a much tougher garden, and whose obedience is imputed to us.

Jesus is the true and better Isaac who was offered up on the mountain by his father and truly was sacrificed for us all while God said, “Now I know you love me, because you did not withhold your one and only Son who you love for me.” Now we at the foot of the cross know that God loves us because you did not withhold your one and only Son.

Jesus is the true and better Moses who stands in the gap between God and the people and mediates a new and better covenant for us.

Jesus is the true and better Passover Lamb who is offered up for us all, whose blood covers over us so that the angel of death would pass over us.

Jesus is the true and better tabernacle, the presence of God that not only dwells among his people, but the presence that invites us in not on one day of the year after sacrifices have been made but every day because of the better sacrifice offered.

Jesus is the true and better priest, the One who goes into the Father’s presence on our behalf with our requests and brings us with him into the Holy of Holies.

Jesus is the true and better David whose victory becomes his people’s victory though they never lifted a stone to accomplish it themselves.

You see – the Bible isn’t primarily about you! And that’s good news! Because the Bible isn’t primarily about what you have to do – it’s about what God has done. And when you see that the Bible is about what God has done, what you find is that you are more loved than you could imagine that your flaws, your weaknesses, your sins can be exposed and God can heal you and restore you and remake you so that you can live and love freely.

Wait for the Fullness of Time

Paul tells us that the Father’s plan is still being worked out. It is a plan that he set in motion from the very beginning and that will culminate in all things being brought together in Christ. But right now, we feel how all things haven’t been brought together. There’s still the battle with the the system of this world, my own flesh that desires things that are contrary to God’s ways, and the devil who opposes me.

This helps me when I read the Bible. When I was taught all the stories of the Bible, what I thought it was about was how good I behaved. Since the Bible was all about the Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth, I had better get the act right, otherwise I would be in serious trouble. But the problem I ran into is that all of the examples in the Bible were miserable failures. If I was to be like them, I’d be in serious trouble.

- Adam lived in perfect peace, but he couldn’t resist the serpent’s whisper.
- Noah was a drunkard who exposed himself to his family.
- Jacob betrayed his brother in a moment of weakness for a pot of stew.
- Moses had a fierce temper and took it out on the rock rather than pleading with God.



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- David was a king who didn't go to war but stayed home, killed another woman's husband after he got her pregnant.
- Peter was a loud-mouthed fisherman who unleashed his sword to kill a man but missed the servant of the high priest.
- Paul was a great missionary who killed many Christians before his conversion.

But there is a better story in the Bible, and it's not about heroes or examples to follow or avoid.

When Eve fell into sin, she was promised that a seed – someone from her line – would come as a deliverer. And this child would strike the head of the serpent and defeat his foes. So there is a son who would come from Abraham who is not by works but by promise, God's only promise, so that he could show you that the impossible can be accomplished when no other way seems hopeful. He is the true Israel who will keep the commandments of God. He is the son of David who will bring the kingdom in its fullness.

And the seed of the woman will not be defeated when the enemies of God come against us. In fact, Paul tells us in Romans 16:19-20 that the God of peace will soon crush Satan underneath our feet. And this is a sure promise because of the blood of Christ.

Paul says that God's plan in Christ was to bring about the redemption through Christ's blood. And this language of redemption takes us back to Israel, in bondage and slavery in Egypt. It's the language of a people who could not free themselves, but needed to be rescued. And this is what God did in sending his own Son. The entire OT is pointing forward to this grand rescue, and the NT keeps pointing us backward to that moment on the cross.

But we haven't fully escaped. We are between Egypt and the Promised Land. We are exiles and strangers. The fullness of time has not yet come. What this means is that we know that the Bible is the story of how God protects his seed so that he might bring about the rescuer. This means that we can be confident that God will accomplish his purposes for us. But while we wait, we know that God has given us much good to do – good works that he's prepared in advance for us to walk in (Eph. 2:10) so that we might show the hope that we have of this coming rescue for the children of promise and for the creation that groans for its redemption with the children of God (Rom. 8:20-22)

So we wait – not passively, hoping for some wish to come true, but actively, working for that better day, believing that God's grand rescue plan is being worked out in ways that we cannot even begin to imagine (Eph. 3:21).

Long for Heaven & Earth United

Paul tells us that in Christ God is going to reunite heaven and earth. They are not going to be two separate spheres, but will become one. What does he mean by this?

Ever since Genesis 3, the problem that has existed is that humans have become afraid of God. When Adam and Eve heard God walking in the cool of the evening in the garden, they hid themselves and were afraid and ashamed. Fear, guilt, and shame because of our sin have separated us from God. We can't walk and talk with him naturally on our own.

The Story of Everything: Christ the Center – Ephesians 1:10
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So the Bible is the story of God working to reunite heaven and earth. In the construction of the tabernacle, God gave Moses specific instructions about how it was to be built (Exod. 25-31; 34-40). Many people enjoy their Bible reading up to Exodus 24. But after that, Exodus, Leviticus, and sections of Numbers just feel hard to read. And we struggle to read it because we fail to appreciate that the details about the building of the tabernacle are not an interruption to the story, but a very important part of heaven and earth being combined together.

In Hebrews 8, the writer details for us how the priests would offer sacrifices at the tabernacle and they were to follow the Lord's instructions with great precision and detail, even in the tabernacle's construction (READ Heb. 8:1-5). What God was doing was telling the people how heaven and earth would come back together.

What is amazing, however, is that we don't rebuild heaven here, but God brings heaven to us. Jesus comes in all of his glory and splendor! The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, and we have seen his glory, full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:14). And one day, Revelation 21 tells us that heaven will come down. Jesus will never leave heaven again. Instead, he will bring heaven with him so that heaven and earth can come together.

Charles Wesley, the hymn writer of the 1700s, would put it this way:

Let earth and heaven combine,
Angels and men agree,
To praise in songs Divine
The' incarnate Deity,
Our God contracted to a span,
Incomprehensibly made man.

He deigns in flesh to' appear,
Widest extremes to join,
To bring our vileness near,
And make us all Divine;
And we the life of God shall know,
For God is manifest below.

For this reason, God places his Spirit in us. He dwells in us. Heaven has come to us to bring us to heaven. Heaven is a place on earth. It's where God dwells. And his Spirit in us is a guarantee that heaven and earth will come together one day and all things will be made new.

And now, when I open the family albums, what I love seeing is not just me and the events of my life, but how I spent time with family, the rich history I have, the amazing gift of God that I belong to a long line of saints who love him and live for him.

And when I open the album and see that the story includes me, I feel loved, freed from performance, and a longing to be with the people I love. And I hope when you open the Bible, you're freed from the



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performance trap and see that God has shown you his grace so that you might live free and enjoy his presence forever.