

The Bigger Story: Week 49

First Week of Advent...And Wait, There is More!

Luke 1:26-35, Isaiah 40:3-10, Revelation 4, Luke 11:1-2

Luke 1:28-29: Gabriel greets Mary (“exalted one”) and states three things:

1. She was highly favored and
2. The Lord was with her and
3. She was blessed

How are these things true for all Christians? (Ephesians 1:6, Matthew 28:20, Ephesians 1:3)

Luke 1:30-33: Gabriel announces the birth of the Messiah: ***What is revealed about Jesus? How was and is Jesus great?***

- The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father, David: (2 Samuel 7:12-16), He has the rightful authority to rule over Israel, and of His kingdom there will be no end. ***How does Jesus’ rule impact your life? How do you connect this with Revelation?***
- Isaiah 40:3-5: The Lord is coming to His people like a triumphant King, with the road prepared before Him so He can travel in ease. ***What does preparing the way look like? How can we prepare the way for Him in our hearts, minds and lives?***
- Luke 11:1-2: ***How can we have passion for and prioritize God’s glory and agenda? His name and kingdom? Continually preparing our hearts, minds and lives for Him?***

Luke 1:34-37: “For with God, nothing will be impossible...” Literally, “no word of God shall be powerless” ***What does this indicate about God?*** (Isaiah 40:5)

- Luke 11:1-2: ***Why does God want us to pray that His will would be done, when we know He is able to accomplish it Himself?***
- Isaiah 40:9: Is an invitation to behold God and share (shout!) His message. ***What message is to be shouted with strength? What does it mean to behold God?***

List all the attributes of God that you see in Revelation chapter 4.

Revelation 4: begins the 3rd section of the book: Things that shall take place after this (Revelation 1:19) From Revelation 4 - 19 is a section about God’s judgment upon the world preceding Jesus’ earthly reign.

Revelation 4 introduces from where the place of judgement comes: God’s throne in heaven. ***Why is this the centerpiece of the chapter? What does the throne show about God?***

- Luke 11:1-2: ***What does it mean that God is our Father in heaven?***
- Isaiah 40:10: Behold the returning Lord: Our God will return to earth, coming with power to rule! When He comes back, He will reward His people and inspect His work. ***What does this indicate and encourage?***
- Before Jesus shows John some of the details of the end times, ***why does John need to see God seated on His throne first? How would you define the following statement: “God is sovereign”?***

Revelation 4:5-11: ***What happens at the throne of God?*** The living creatures constantly worship God, they declare the Lord God is Almighty. They never cease to extol the holiness of God. ***What does this mean for us?***

The ancient Greek word is “pantokrator” with the idea of “the One who has His hand on everything” (Revelation 1:8) ***How does this aid in the understanding of God’s sovereignty? That He accomplishes His purposes (Luke 1:34-37)?***

- The fact that God is Creator gives Him claim over everything (Romans 9:21). God’s right over Creator can be accepted and enjoyed...or rejected. ***Discuss.***
- ***Why do the 24 elders cast their crowns before the throne? How can we have the same attitude?***

What did you learn about God? What did you learn about Jesus?

What did you learn about man? Is there any action to take?

How can you share what you read today?

How does what you read give you hope?

The Bigger Story: Week 50

Second Week of Advent...And Wait, There is More!

Matthew 1:18-25, Isaiah 9:2-7, Revelation 5:3-14, Matthew 6:9-10

Matthew 1:18-21: The mission of Jesus: to save His people from their sins:

- From the *penalty* of sin, *power* of sin and *presence* of sin
- Belonging to Abraham doesn't bring salvation... belonging to Jesus, being one of His people, does!

Matthew 1:22-23: The virgin birth as the fulfillment of prophecy (Isaiah 7:14).

- Immanuel, "God with us": Shows Jesus is fully God and fully man. ***He has come to us, how should we come to Him?***
- He came to live (tabernacle) with His people (2 Cor. 6:16) so that He could reveal God to us. ***What does it mean that He is with us?***
- God with us in Person... in fullness (Colossians 2:9, 1 Peter 1:18-19)
- He shows us the way, is the truth, gives us life... (Philippians 2:6-11; Hebrews 4:15-16).
- He is with us forever (Matt 28:20, Heb. 13:5, Rom 8:35-39, John 14:6)

Isaiah 9:6: The glory of the Messiah, who will reign. God's power and promise shown through a child, His Son (Genesis 3:15, Philippians 2:7).

And His name will be called: These aren't literal names but aspects of His character and mission:

- Jesus is **Wonderful**: The glory of who Jesus is and what He has done for us should fill us with wonder. ***How do you respond?***
- Jesus is our **Counselor**: Jesus should be our guide and council. ***How do you know Jesus as counselor?***
- Jesus is **Mighty God**: He is the God of all creation, who reigns in heaven, the only One worthy of our worship/praise (Is. 10:21, Rev. 1:8)
- Jesus is the **Everlasting Father**: Jesus is the source or author of all eternity, He is the Creator Himself.
- Jesus is the **Prince of Peace**: He makes peace, significantly between God and man. ***How have you known the peace of Jesus?***

Isaiah 9:7: The glory of the Messiah's reign: He will rule for all eternity

- Jesus will rule on David's throne, over his kingdom, a fulfillment of God's covenant with David (2 Samuel 7)
- God, the Lord of all heavenly armies, has promised to accomplish this word, part of it has been accomplished already. ***How do we trust and wait for and with Him?***

Matthew 6:9-13: The model prayer (*how*, not *what*, to prayer)... ***What is prayer designed to do?***

- Our Father in heaven: We remember and honor God as Father, as well as His place in heaven, recognizing His holiness and authority. ***How can we credit God all power, glory and honor in our prayers?***
- Your will be done: ***How did Jesus model this? How can we pray with the desire that God's will be done?***
- ***What does it mean that God invites our participation in prayers? That He provides for us?***

The focus of **REVELATION 4** was the throne. In chapter 5, John begins with reference to the throne, then shifts his focus to the scroll held by the Lord, the *only One worthy* to take and open it.

Revelation 5:1: The throne and the scroll, sealed with 7 seals:

- Law required a will to be sealed 7 times and require witnesses to read and open them. Some see this scroll as the earth's deed or the final settlement of the affairs of the universe, God's comprehensive program culminating in the second coming of Jesus.
- God has a book in which the history of the universe is already written. In His hand, He holds the history of the world in advance... He initiates it. Only God can hold this scroll.
- The emphasis is on the One who is worthy to take it.

Revelation 5:2-4: ***Who is worthy to open the scroll?***

No one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll... or look in it! Only God can unfold this plan.

- Revelation 5:5-7: The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the sacrificial Lamb, is worthy to open the scroll.

Revelation 5:8-10: The song: Praise to the Worthy One!

- Prayers of the saints: possibly "Your Kingdom come: prayers

Revelation 5:11-12: Multitudes of angels declare the worthiness of the Lamb because of the redemption He accomplished! Heaven is pictured as wonderful cycles of praise to God. ***How can we praise Him for the redemption He bestows upon us? For who He works in others?***

Revelation 5:13-14: All creation praises the Father and the Lamb!

- The worship given to the Lamb recognizes His deity: we worship Jesus as God, as He is, showing total submission and worship to Him

Forever and ever: The living God reigns eternally and He is ever worthy of our praise.

What did you learn about God? What did you learn about Jesus?

What did you learn about man? Is there any action to take?

How can you share what you read today?

How does what you read give you hope?

The Bigger Story: Week 51

Third Week of Advent...And Wait, There is More!

Revelation 22: Hope for Everyone: Come Lord Jesus!

Revelation 22:1: The interior of the New Jerusalem: A river flowing from the throne of God. Here, there is no want of any thing, all is provided by God and the Lamb and, because it comes from God, it is pure and abundant.

Revelation 22:2: The tree of life with 12 fruits and healing (“health-giving” or “ministering”) of the nations. The Bible begins with a tree of life (Genesis 3:22-24) which man was not allowed to eat from after the sin at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Seeing the tree of life again points to a restoration of all things. God restores all things!

Revelation 22:3-5: Since the fall, man and creation have lived with the effect of the curse (Genesis 3:16-19): pain in childbirth, friction between the sexes, hard and futile and death. In heaven, the curse is gone.

- We will serve Him, service centered on God
- We will see His face, enjoying fellowship with Him.
 - The greatest glory of heaven: to know God, to know Jesus, more intimately and wonderfully than we ever could on earth!
- We will forever be identified with God: no doubt: we belong to Him.
- We will not know darkness: God Himself is the light.
- We will reign with Him forever and ever.

Revelation 22:6-7: Jesus is coming quickly (“suddenly”). God wants to keep all generations watching and ready for His return. “Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy...”: This blessing reminds us that prophecy gives us a word to keep, not merely material for interesting discussions and debates. ***What is the intent?*** The main intent of prophecy is to lead us to trust and obey God and apply His truth to the way we live.

Revelation 22:8-9: No created being should ever be worshipped. Jesus receives worship from angels (Heb 1:6) and men (Matt 8:2, 14:33, John 9:38).

Revelation 22:10-11: The warnings of this book are sufficient... There will be no time for last minute repentance, but there is time now.

Revelation 22:12-13: Jesus declares: I am coming quickly! We shouldn’t miss the note of urgency and warning in what Jesus tells us about His coming. Always be ready! (Matthew 24:44)

- ***If Jesus will give to everyone according to his work, does that mean we are saved by our works?*** No, it shows that living faith will have works with it (James 2:20, Titus 3:8).

After reminding us to be ready for Jesus’ return, and who we are/what we do in Him, He reminds us just who He is:

- The Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last. Fully God (Isaiah 41:4)

Jesus is the beginning, middle and end for the Christian. ***How so?***

Revelation 22:14-15: Doing His commandments does not earn us eternal life, but it is evidence that we have been granted eternal life. There is a blessing in doing His commandments, because they are good for us. We respond to Him and obey Him out of love and thanksgiving.

Revelation 22:16: Jesus, using His Messianic title, (Isaiah 11:1, Matthew 22:41-46) authenticates the entire book of Revelation, written to the churches.

Revelation 22:17: **Come!** This is an *open invitation* to receive salvation from Jesus. He will not exclude anyone who comes to Him. Anyone who desires salvation in Jesus Christ can come to Him and take the water of life freely. So great is the mercy and love of God!

- ***How do you know if God has worked in your heart? Go through a little checklist. Have you heard? Are you thirsty for God and eternal life? Do you want Him?*** Then come!

All this world's religion can be summed up in the idea that you must bring something to the "gods." In Christianity, God invites us to take the water of life freely. *He came to us.* You can't bring anything to save or justify or commend yourself before God, but you can take the salvation He offers. Come to Jesus. Take the water of life freely.

Revelation 22:18-19: There is a high price to pay for tampering with Revelation specifically, and the Scriptures in general. This solemn promise also implies that the Book of Revelation can be understood. ***Why would God assign such a strong rebuke if no one could understand the book?***

Revelation 22:20-21: To the very end, Revelation emphasizes readiness and watchfulness. It details many prophetic events but closes with the longing for the return of Jesus for His people...the rapture of the church. Maranatha!

- The answers to the problems of this world are not in our feeble works, but in the return of The One whose sovereign power controls the course of human affairs. ***How does this give hope? Perspective?***

The book (and the Bible) ends with a word of grace and *grace for all*. All may come to Him, all may have His gracious provision, love and grace.

"Whatever you may miss, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with you. In whatsoever points you or any of us may fail, may we never come short of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Charles Spurgeon

What did you learn about God? What did you learn about Jesus?

What did you learn about man? Is there any action to take?

How can you share what you read today?

How does what you read give you hope?

The Bigger Story: Week 52

And Wait, There is More!

Luke 2:1-14, Isaiah 11:1-11, Revelation 21:1-4, Matthew 28:18-20

Luke 2:1-3: The world Jesus was born into was a world hungry for a savior, living under the reign of a powerful figure (Caesar Augustus) God allowed Caesar Augustus to rise to power to accomplish His purposes, to fulfill His promise that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2)

- *What do you learn about God? How do you understand His sovereignty?*

Luke 2:4-7: Joseph and Mary come to Bethlehem (80 miles) and Jesus is born. There was no room for Him at the inn... *is there room for Him now? In our hearts? Homes? Heads? How can we make room for Him?*

Luke 2:8: Bethlehem's shepherds were known to care for the temple flock, used in temple sacrifice...Jesus is the lamb who was slain for us (1 Peter 1:19-20, Revelation 13:8) *How does this point to Good News?*

Luke 2:9-14: The announcement: "Good tidings" literally means they preached the Gospel!

Luke 2:15-16: The shepherds go urgently, without hesitation to see Jesus. *How can we go likewise?* Luke 2:17-20: The shepherds spread the news wide of Jesus' birth. *Do we marvel? Treasure and ponder them in our hearts? Praise God? How do we respond?*

Isaiah 11:1: A stem sprouts from the stump of Jesse (fulfilled in Jesus 600 years later) Even when it looks hopeless, God can bring forth life.

- Note the emphasized humble nature of the Messiah. Jesse was the much less famous father of King David.

Isaiah 11:2: Jesus displayed the fruit of the Spirit to the uttermost because He was a perfect vessel (John 3:34).

- The Spirit of **wisdom**: Jesus is perfectly wise (1 Corinthians 1:30)
- The Spirit of **understanding**: Jesus understands all things...He understands us perfectly (Hebrews 4:15-16)
- The Spirit of **counsel**: Jesus has both the wisdom and the understanding to be a perfect counselor
- The Spirit of **might**: Jesus has the power to do what He desires to do, the love (will/desire) and the might to help us.
- The Spirit of **knowledge**: Jesus knows everything...even our hearts

The Spirit of the **fear of the Lord**: Jesus willingly kept Himself in a place of submission, respect, and honor to God the Father

When Jesus added humanity to His deity, He didn't stop being God. Jesus chose to "empty Himself" of some of the privileges of deity (Philippians 2:5-8) choosing to rely on the Spirit of the Lord. *How can we rely on the Spirit?*

Isaiah 11:3-5: Nothing pleased Jesus more than doing the will of His Father (John 4:34). *Can the same be said of us?*

Revelation 21:1: The new heaven and the new earth – All things made new

The ancient Greek word for “new” (kaine) means “new in character, ‘fresh’.” It doesn’t mean “recent” or “new in time.” It indicates better, created out of nothing, not remade (Luke 21:33, Isaiah 65:17).

Revelation 21:2-4: The New Jerusalem descends from heaven, the perfect community of the people of God. This place of hope is where our real citizenship lies (Hebrews 12:22, Philippians 3:20). Here, we have something totally unique: a sinless, pure, community of righteousness, a holy city. But this is not an achievement of man. It is a gift from God.

- God’s desire is to live in close fellowship with man
- Man’s purpose is to be a people unto God

The New Jerusalem is distinguished by what it does not have (tears, sorrow, death or pain). ***What does this mean? What does it indicate about God?***

Matthew 28:18-20: Jesus, the authority, instructs/commissions His disciples

- Go therefore: Because Jesus has this authority, we are therefore commanded to go.
 - ***How does His authority send us, His authority guide us and His authority empower us?***
- Disciples are made through teaching (ALL: the whole counsel of God)...not just with words, but with the power of the always-present Jesus and inspired by the Spirit
 - The word “always” implies “the whole of every single day”
 - ***How does the promise of His constant presence strengthen and guide us?***
- ***What is included in Jesus’ presence with us?***
 - Protection: we are never out of His sight or supervision
 - Power: we work in His name, under His authority, with His Spirit
 - Peace: the church/we belong to Jesus and He gives us His peace (John 14:27, Philippians 4:7)

What did you learn about God? What did you learn about Jesus?

What did you learn about man? Is there any action to take?

How can you share what you read today?

How does what you read give you hope?

What are we waiting for?

How can you wait well?