

# The Story of God

## Chapter 12: Proclaiming the Good News

(Acts - Present day)

The story of the Bible is a story about the exaltation of the Son of God as the Hero and ultimate King of the universe, who unites the realms of heaven and earth in Himself. Humanity plays a part in this story: God wants our loving loyalty and offers His loyal love to us. He wants us to join Him in partnership: to work together on this project called "the heavens and the earth."

### The Story

**Review:** God created a world of two realms (heaven and earth) and invited both humans and spirit beings into His Royal Family to rule the world with Him. Instead, humanity joined spirit beings in a great cosmic rebellion, fracturing the Family Kingdom and resulting in death and exile, with humanity under the rule of evil spirits. God promised a new human who would crush the rebellion (and the original rebel) and restore what was lost, both for the nation of Israel and for all humanity. God himself became that new human in Jesus, who, through his own death and resurrection, defeated death and was inaugurated as the King over the two realms.

After Jesus' death and resurrection, he appeared to his followers many times over 40 days to reassure them of both His love and of their mission. He told them, "you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). He commissioned them as his Kingdom representatives to spread the news of the Kingdom: that there's a new King and that He wants the people of the nations to be part of His family again!

We've got to go back in the story to understand the significance of this. Remember, in the beginning, God created humanity to rule and reign with Him over the world. He made us to be part of His Royal Family and He wanted to partner with us in ruling His creation. Humanity rejected God's partnership over and over, eventually resulting in God giving us our own way: He scattered and divided humanity into many nations and languages under the control of other spirit beings. Humanity was no longer part of God's family, and being under the rule of rebel spirits was terrible - just look at all the destruction and sorrow in the world.

So now when Jesus tells his followers "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, therefore go...." He is declaring that the authority that once belonged to those spirit beings ruling the nations has now been transferred to Him. He rules over the nations now, even though most of the inhabitants of those nations don't yet know it. This is where we come in: it's our job to spread the news.

The Hebrew Scriptures had long foretold this day.

God had promised Abraham that his family would bring blessing to the nations.

David, in Psalm 2, quoted God speaking to His Son, saying, "Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, and the ends of the earth your possession."

In Psalm 82, he said "Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!"

Isaiah had quoted God speaking to His Chosen Servant, saying, "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob... I will also make you a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

In fact, if we review what was foretold about the Savior King we see that over and over God promised that this King would bring the nations back into God's family and rule over them with justice and blessing. See The Promised One section

So Jesus commissions His followers to be the message-bearers to the nations, and then He leaves. But before leaving, Jesus gives some specific instructions to His followers: He tells them to wait in Jerusalem until they receive the power of the Holy Spirit whom He will send. Then He ascends to heaven to take His rightful place on the throne as the Human/Divine King. A couple of angels then appear to His followers and tell them that He will come again, just as He left.

Jesus' followers wait around in the city, and sure enough, just as Jesus had promised, He sends them His Spirit.

It's the day of Pentecost, also called the Feast of the Harvest: a day celebrating God's provision and abundance in the crop harvest. Jews from all over the known world had come to Jerusalem to celebrate. (Remember how at exile, most of the Jews were scattered to the nations?)

Suddenly, the sound of rushing wind (spirit and wind are the same word in Hebrew) fills the place where Jesus' followers are gathered, and divided tongues of fire appear to rest on them as they are each filled with the Holy Spirit. They go out into the streets and begin speaking in many languages to all the people who have come to the city.

The writer of the Book of Acts, Luke, intentionally portrays this as the beginning of the reversal of the tower of Babel. At Babel, God divided the people into many nations. Now, God divides His Spirit (the divided tongues of fire) among His people. At Babel, God confused humanity's speech, giving different languages to different people. Now, God gives the gift of language to His people, so that they can share the good news of the New King to the confused people from all the nations. God is undoing Babel.

Among all the excitement taking place, Peter stands up and raises his voice to preach a powerful message to all who could hear, that Jesus, the man they had killed, is the Promised One, raised from the dead, who sits on David's throne and is now lord of all. The crowd is cut to the heart and asks "what shall we do?" Peter tells them to turn back to God and pledge their allegiance to Jesus through baptism, and about 3,000 people do.

We see the Holy Spirit empower Jesus' followers in other ways too: He gives some of them the power to work miracles of healing like Jesus did. Others, He supernaturally transports to different places. He gives others incredible boldness and specific messages to proclaim to the authorities who oppose them.

At first, this movement of Jesus followers consists of Jews and Jewish converts, but pretty quickly, Jesus' followers realize that their message is for people of every nation.

(Possibly tell the story of Peter's dream?)

One day, a devout Jewish man named Saul or Paul (Saul was his Hebrew name, Paul his Greek one), has an encounter with the risen Jesus. Jesus appears to him in a series of visions and commissions him to be His messenger to the nations. Paul travels throughout the Greco-Roman world, proclaiming the news that Jesus is the Rescuer King, and that people of every nation can now become part of His Kingdom, even part of the Royal Family.

Back at the time of the Jewish exile, the Northern tribes (led by the tribe of Ephraim), had been scattered to the nations, never to return. Jacob had prophesied over Joseph's son Ephraim that he would become a multitude of nations, and God had promised that He would one day rescue all His people (both North and South). Paul now sees his mission going to the nations as fulfilling that promise - the multitude of nations that the Northern tribes had been scattered into are now being invited back into the Family. This is a rescue mission both for Israel and for all humanity!

Paul, and the other early followers of Jesus, have opposition from many different groups. Yet, Paul does not see his opposition as being primarily of human origin. In fact, he sees his opposition as the rebel spirits who have now been deposed of their right to rule. These spirits know that their judgement is coming, and so they are scrapping and fighting to hold on as long as they can. Their primary weapon is fear and deception - if people don't know that there's a way for them to be free, they will stay under the control of the rebels. But Jesus has been seated in authority above these rebel spirits, and will one day return to destroy them and their rebellion.

In the meantime, the mission of the first followers of Jesus has been passed down from one generation to the next, even to us. Jesus asks us to be His messengers, to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom, and let everyone know that God wants them to come back into His Royal Family! What an amazing role to play - He's trusted us with great privilege and responsibility. And He's given us His Holy Spirit to empower us on this mission.

So let's review what we've been told throughout the story about the Promised One, Jesus.

## **The Promised One**

## **Review**

- He is a new and better Adam, a descendant of Eve, who passes the test, crushes the serpent, undoes the rebellion, and rules the world as priest/king.
- He is a new Noah, bringing rest to the world through his righteous sacrifice and restoring God's blessing to humanity.
- He is a son of Abraham, displaying faith (loving loyalty) in YHWH and blessing the nations.
- He is a son of Joseph, who, like Joseph, was betrayed by his brothers and suffered greatly though he was innocent, but then was exalted to rescue and care for the people as a Shepherd King. All the nations somehow become part of His family and he is a mighty conqueror who rules the nations.
- He is son of Judah, who offers his life in exchange for others, crushes the head of his enemy (the serpent), and rules over the nations.
- He is a prophet like Moses, working signs and wonders, and rescuing the people from slavery.
- He is a second Joshua: a warrior who leads the people victoriously into the promised land. (Joshua was a son/descendent of Joseph through Ephraim)
- He is a new and better faithful priest who does what is on God's heart and mind.
- He is a son of David, who has the power to drive away evil spirits.
- He is an anointed son of David and son of God who is a new priest/king - He builds a new temple and rules on his throne forever over all the nations - an eternal Kingdom.
- He comes from Bethlehem, but also comes from "of old" (He'll be divine.)
- He rules from a new Jerusalem, which becomes the new Eden.
- He is both human and divine: the Cloud-Rider and the Son of Man
- He shares His Kingdom with His faithful holy ones
- He judges and destroys all evil.
- All the nations are invited into His Kingdom and His Family.

## **New**

- He commissions His followers to be His messengers, announcing the good news of His rule and reign.
- He empowers His followers to complete their task by sending them the Holy Spirit to fill and dwell in them.

## **Application & False Stories:**

**Lie:** My group is more special than your group.

**Truth:** God has invited every person, tribe, nation, etc. back into His Royal Family - to become one new humanity united in Jesus.

**Lie:** Now that I'm a Christian, all I'm supposed to do is try not to sin and wait around for heaven.

**Truth:** God wants to partner with us even now, and He's given us a mission-critical role to play: we are the messengers of the King!

## Resources:

VIDEO: Witness

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/martus-witness/>

VIDEO: The Gospel of the Kingdom

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/gospel-kingdom/>

VIDEO: The Holy Spirit

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/holy-spirit/>

*The Drama of Scripture* pg 182-225

The Unseen Realm, pg 296-345

## Series Goals

- Evoke wonder & participation (a new supernatural lens)
- It's all about Jesus and His Family Kingdom (relationship and purpose)
- God's story over all other stories (confront lies)

## Overarching Plot Focal Points

(each story connects to these)

- God wants to grow and share His Family Kingdom
- Humanity was created for *rich relationship* and *profound purpose* in the Family Kingdom
- A cosmic rebellion fractures the Family Kingdom
- God promises a hero to crush the adversary, rescue humanity, and restore the Family Kingdom
- Humanity must choose between trusting God's promise or continuing in rebellion