



Episode 7: God Comes to Earth

The Gospels

Key Verse:

***“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”
Peter answered, “God’s Messiah.” (Luke 9:20)***

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Imagine a line that goes on for city blocks. What are these people waiting for? Super Bowl tickets? A must-have tech gadget?

Imagine a crowd. People are pressed together, jostling one another and standing on tiptoe to get a better view. What are they trying to see? A-listers walking the red carpet? A famous pop-star’s performance?

At last, we’ve come to the point in our story where the hero arrives on the scene. Yet, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, there was no line of expectant admirers anticipating the sight of the newborn King. There was no throng of people gathered around the manger hoping to catch a glimpse of the Messiah. The incarnate son of God came into the world as a helpless infant, and the only witnesses were his average, ordinary parents, and a few shepherds.

While the Jewish people expected that a Messiah would come, they didn’t expect him to come like that. It wouldn’t be the only expectation that Jesus would defy.

For weeks now, we’ve been hearing of the promised one of God — the seed of Abraham and the son of David. He’s the lamb of the Passover, the suffering servant of Isaiah’s prophecy and the victorious hero of Daniel’s vision. Finally he’s here!

The Messiah would come as King and Savior, but not in the way the people anticipated. He came to defeat a much bigger enemy than Rome. This week we're going to focus on his life, before we consider his death and resurrection next week.

Day 1

Last week we heard the cry of the prophets, calling the people to come back to God. The people didn't listen and were ultimately sent into exile, but God's prophets comforted them with the promise that one day God would fully restore them. Though a remnant returned to the land and the temple was rebuilt, those promises didn't find their ultimate fulfillment. There was something missing, and in the centuries between what we call the Old Testament and the New Testament, hope for a Messiah grew.

For 400 years, no new prophecy from God was heard. Israel remained an occupied land. Worship in the temple continued, and while there were always faithful Jews who sought the Lord, many in the religious establishment used their positions to maintain their own status and power. Their worship was empty because their hearts were not turned toward the Lord.

For others, the hope for a Messiah was more about the hope for political and military dominance than spiritual rescue and redemption. They wanted a strongman to kick the Romans out of the land and establish Israel as a first century "super power." These people were more interested in ruling over the other nations than in blessing them. Neither group was expecting Jesus. But if they'd read the signs laid out by the prophets, perhaps they would have been.

Israel's final prophet was Malachi, and it's his book that ends our Old Testament. He records the Lord's promise that one day he will send a "messenger who will prepare the way for me." At the opening of his Gospel, Mark combines this prophecy with a similar one from Isaiah, and connects them with John the Baptist, the one who will prepare the people for the coming of Jesus Messiah (Mark 1:2-3).

The Gospel of Luke gives us more information about John the Baptist. John was Jesus' cousin and the miracle child of one of Israel's high priests, Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. At John's birth, his father recognizes what God is doing, "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David as he said through his holy prophets of long ago" (Luke 1:68-70). John grows up and does precisely what the prophecy said he would do, he prepares the way for Jesus. He calls the people to repentance, just as the prophets of old had done.

Over and over, the Gospel writers — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John— demonstrate how Jesus' coming fulfills the Old Testament. They want to show that Jesus truly is the Messiah that God promised, beginning with his birth, and moving all the way through his death, resurrection, and ascension. Today we're considering examples from Jesus' earliest years.

Notice how Luke establishes Jesus as the one Israel had been waiting for by including a story set on the temple grounds.

Read the Word

Luke 2:25–39 (NIV)

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

*²⁹ "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,
³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel."*

³³ The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him.

³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

³⁶ There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. ³⁸ Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹ When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰ And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

- What was Simeon's response to Jesus? What about Anna?
- Having spent several weeks considering God's big story, how does this passage take on even greater significance to you?

Reflect

Each of the four Gospel writers tells us the life of Jesus from a slightly different perspective. Yet each one is careful to show how Jesus is the promised one who fulfills the Old Testament scripture.

Matthew begins his Gospel with a genealogy to show that Jesus is in the line of David. As we've seen, according to 2 Samuel 7, the promised one had to be one of David's descendants. Matthew then tells the story of Jesus' birth with an emphasis on how these events fulfill the words of the prophets. He records the appearance of an angel who declares that by the Spirit, the virgin Mary will conceive and give birth to a son, and his name will be Jesus, "because he will save his people from their sins." Matthew goes on to say, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us')" (Matthew 1:21–23). God would once again dwell with his people.

John's Gospel begins with some of the most awe-inspiring words in the Bible, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:1–5).

John goes on to say, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). By echoing the creation story of Genesis 1, John wants us to know that Jesus is more than a human Messiah, he is God incarnate. The Son of God, Second Person of the Trinity had come to earth to "tabernacle" among us. Since the garden, we've seen God's continued desire to make his home with us. Now he's arrived in the flesh.

And here in Luke, in the passage we read above, we see how people who had been desperately waiting for the Lord's deliverance respond to the newborn Savior. It's no wonder that here on the grounds of the temple, the place designed by God so that he could dwell with his people, the eternal Son of God was recognized for who he truly was. The Messiah had arrived and God's plan was coming to pass.

The story with all its prophecies and promises has led us here, to Jesus. The Gospel writers want that to be clear. And as Jesus' story progresses, we understand more and more what Jesus came to do. The Jewish Messiah — offspring of Eve, seed of Abraham, and son of David — came to rescue and rule over the entire world.

Pray

If it's helpful, use the following to begin your own prayer time with God.

Almighty God, I am amazed by you! You planned to come and rescue us from the beginning. Your faithfulness has never wavered. Thank you for your Word, and that I can discover so much about who you are from it.

Day 2

He's here! We've been waiting for Jesus, the hero of our story to arrive. We've seen how desperately humanity has needed him. Beginning with Adam and Eve, humanity chose to go its own way and reject God's care and guidance. In every episode of the story, we've seen the same pattern of sin and rebellion repeated. Only Jesus can break the cycle.

We saw God choose the children of Abraham to be his people. He rescued them from slavery in Egypt and brought them into the promised land. He gave them his law to show them how to relate to him and each other. They were to reflect his character, becoming a holy nation and a royal priesthood. God had them build a tabernacle in which he could meet with them. By binding himself to them through the covenant, God promised to never abandon them. In his relationship with Israel, God was always faithful, but his people weren't.

Where first Adam, and then Israel failed, Jesus did not. He would be faithful to God and obedient to his will. He trusted the Father completely, and demonstrated it time and time again. As you read two stories from Jesus' early ministry, think about how he achieved what Adam and Eve, and then Israel as a nation failed to do.

Read the Word

Matthew 3:13–4:11 (NIV)

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

¹⁵ Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

***4** Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."*

4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:

*"He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."*

7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

- What is said to Jesus at his baptism?
- How is Jesus tempted? How does he respond?

Reflect

Israel entered the promised land by crossing the Jordan River. John the Baptist called the people back to this spot to make a fresh start. He called them to once again enter the Jordan, this time for baptism. There, they would sink under its waters and emerge as people committed to trusting God and following his voice.

Of course Jesus had no need for a fresh start with God. He lived in constant obedience to the Father and trusted him completely. But to begin his ministry, he answers the Father's call to come to the Jordan and be baptized alongside sinners. Jesus identifies himself with the people of Israel and ultimately with all of Adam's race. The Spirit comes down on him and the Father expresses his love and approval. The entire Trinity is represented. And like Israel after they exited the parted waters of the Red Sea, Jesus exits the water and is led into the wilderness.

Once again Jesus identifies himself with Adam and Israel and for 40 days he is tempted. Adam and Eve questioned God's goodness and ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. The Israelites wandered for 40 years struggling constantly with doubt and disobedience. Jesus accomplishes what they could not. He trusts in God's guidance and provision. Unlike Adam or Israel, Jesus never doubts God's goodness or love.

Jesus maintains the relationship with the Father that humanity was meant to have. Jesus does not reject God's ways, but lives his entire life according to the Father's will. Jesus does not

reject his love, but trusts in the Father's care. At last, the cycle of sin and rebellion is broken! And as we'll see, his victory over sin becomes ours.

All of the events we're discussing this week would bring Jesus' disciples to a point where they had to make a decision about who their leader really was. It became clear that he was more than just a wise teacher, or even a prophet.

At one point, Jesus will ask his disciples who the crowds say that he is.

They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "God's Messiah." (Luke 9:19-20)

At some point in our experience with Jesus, we have to make the same decision. Who do you think Jesus really is? It's a question that we must not put off answering.

Pray

If it's helpful, use the following to begin your own prayer time with God.

Thank you Jesus! You broke the cycle of sin and rebellion for all of humanity. Now by your Spirit, I am free! Give me strength when I am tempted. Remind me that your victory is mine.

Day 3

This week we're getting to spend some time in the Gospels with Jesus. Stories all the way from Genesis to Malachi point us to the need for a Messiah — a Savior and a King. Now we're seeing how Jesus demonstrates that he is both.

After his baptism and time in the wilderness, Jesus appoints twelve disciples, an echo back to the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he begins his public ministry. Matthew describes his activity this way, "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people" (Matthew 4:23).

Jesus is giving people the undeniably good news that the kingdom had come. Everything was changing, and the world that had been so horribly marred by sin would eventually be made right.

In his life and ministry, Jesus exemplifies God's kingdom. Not only does he show that he is the King they've been waiting for, he gives the people a glimpse of what life in the kingdom will be. By healing the sick, he proclaims a kingdom that is free from sin and evil. Through his teaching, he illustrates the ways of the King and what he expects of his people. We'll focus on Jesus' miracles tomorrow. Today, we'll consider his teaching.

There are so many examples of Jesus' teaching that we could look at. He told amazing parables that challenge us to think and provoke us to action. He tells us of lost sheep who will be found by their shepherd, and lost sons who are welcomed back by their Father (Luke 15). Jesus used beautiful illustrations that help us understand who he is. He presents himself as a life-giving vine, and insists that as his branches, we abide in him (John 15).

But today, we're going to look at the first eleven verses of Jesus' well-known Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Here Jesus invites us to embrace the way of his kingdom.

Read the Word

Matthew 5:1-12 (NIV)

5 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them.

He said:

*³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.*

*⁵ Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.*

*⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.*

*⁷ Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.*

*⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.*

*⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.*

*¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- What does it mean to be "blessed"? Is this how people in our world usually define what it means to be blessed?

Reflect

When it comes to what it means to be “blessed,” the ancient world thought a lot like our modern one. The assumption is that someone who is under God’s blessing would be easy to identify. To be blessed means having health, wealth, happiness, and success. If God favors you, you would have these things.

Jesus turns these ideas on their head. Because while it’s tempting to read these verses as some self-help guru’s “eleven steps to living a blessed life,” that’s not what Jesus is communicating. These verses are more a mirror than a map. They show us the reflection of a citizen who has already been accepted into the kingdom by the grace of God. This is the shape that kingdom people take as they become more and more like their king.

The first three beatitudes speak to those of humble spirit who acknowledge their complete dependence on God. Humility was not a virtue in the eyes of many in Jesus’ day. Those who pursued strength and honor were thought to find prosperity. Yet, many of the people standing on the hillside listening to Jesus would have been from the poor and marginalized classes. He is promising an inheritance and a place in the kingdom to those who would find little favor in their world.

The next three verses speak to the pursuit of what is right. Those who are passionate about God’s will and long for his justice will find satisfaction. They are not divided in their loyalties, but are pure in heart. God favors them with his face to face presence. Those who show compassion and mercy will be shown the same. The merciful emulate the God of mercy who enters into a sinner’s mess and works to put things right.

Finally, the blessed are peacemakers who will endure persecution in pursuit of God’s righteousness. Because kingdom people are reconciled to God and know his peace as his children, they seek reconciliation and not retaliation, even in the face of persecution.

The kingdom-people described by Jesus would not necessarily be found by searching #blessed on Instagram. They are too busy stepping into the fray to show mercy to the oppressed and advocating for peace and reconciliation. Even if it means sacrificing comfort or status, they will do what’s right. The blessed of the kingdom show humility, not because they are weak, but because behind them stands the one who is infinitely strong.

The first eleven verses of the Sermon on the Mount give us a glimpse into the overall message of Jesus as he offers his hearers a different way to live. A life where success is defined not by status and how much you acquire, but by how much you give, where the metrics of flourishing are righteousness and peace, and where mercy is the greatest command.

Pray

If it’s helpful, use the following to begin your own prayer time with God.

King Jesus, help me understand what it looks like to live everyday as a citizen of your kingdom. I want to reflect the goodness and grace of my king. Your ways are contrary to many of the values of my culture. Show me how to walk in your truth and grace.

Day 4

Since our series began, we've anticipated the arrival of Jesus. This week we're looking at some snapshots from the pages of the Gospels that show us how our story has brought us here. Jesus fulfills the patterns and the predictions of the Old Testament through his life, and as we will see next week, through his death and resurrection.

We started this week with Jesus' birth, and saw how the Gospel writers connected those events with the prophecies of old. We witnessed Jesus' baptism and wilderness temptation and discovered why he was the only one who could at last break the cycle of sin and rebellion. Now we're focusing on Jesus as King and considering how his teaching and miracles reveal God's kingdom.

We started yesterday with Matthew 4:23, "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people." Jesus proclaimed that the kingdom of God had come, and then proceeded to show everyone what that kingdom looked like. It's not a place you find on a map, it's the reign of a righteous and loving King.

Today we'll consider one of his greatest healings, when he raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus demonstrates his power over the creation and his victory over death.

Read the Word

John 11:17–44 (NIV)

¹⁷ On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁹ and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

²¹ "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴ Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

²⁸ After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." ²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

³² When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴ "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

³⁵ Jesus wept.

³⁶ Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

- What does this story tell us about who Jesus is?
- Imagine what it would have been like to be Mary and Martha at their brother's tomb. What would Jesus' presence have meant to you?

Reflect

When Jesus arrives at Bethany, Martha is the first to go out and meet him. It's not hard to imagine the anguish in her voice: *"if you had been here, my brother would not have died."*

There is no indication that Martha is asking Jesus to bring her brother back from the dead. After all, he'd been dead at least four days. We should more likely take this to mean that Martha still has faith in Jesus in a general sense. She believes in a resurrection in the last days and knows that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God (11:24, 27).

Jesus, however has bigger plans than Martha would have dared to dream. Through the miracle he is about to perform, he will demonstrate that he is the resurrection and the life. Jesus' enigmatic statement in verse 25 can apply both to the immediate situation and to a future state. He is not just going to perform one resurrection, but he will enable the eternal resurrection of all who put their faith in him. He will not merely restore life to one dead man, but he will give eternal life to all who trust in his name. In the ultimate sense he is the resurrection and the life.

Martha does not understand any of this and can only speak to that of which she is sure. Jesus is the Son of God and her Savior. She hasn't lost faith in him even in light of her brother's death. Even if she didn't grasp their full meaning, no doubt Christ's words were a comfort to her. In the face of death there is no greater comfort than Jesus.

People deal with death in different ways. Some need to talk through their loss and pain, others need to be doing something. Some want many shoulders to cry on while others prefer to grieve in private. In the two sisters we see a contrast in grief.

When Mary sees Jesus, she falls to his feet in tears. Choking out the words through her sobs, Mary makes the same statement as her sister, "Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died." We don't know the tone in which this was uttered. Was she angry and accusing, or merely lamenting what could have been?

Jesus' response to Mary is different than his to Martha. With the older sister he uses the truth of who he is and what he is accomplishing to comfort her. With Mary, he enters into her pain.

Verse 33 tells us that “he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled.” Jesus loves the woman crumpled in the dust weeping uncontrollably before him and surely felt her grief. He’s grieving for Lazarus too. He reacts with an equally strong emotion - outrage.

Jesus was outraged at death itself. Present at the moment of creation, and the one for whom and through whom everything was made, Jesus never intended for humanity to experience the pain and anguish he saw before him. Jesus hates the sin and death that bring us misery and pain. Jesus weeps because we weep.

Jesus’ outrage and grief were not impotent. He had the power to do something. Jesus asks them, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?” Jesus has power over death itself. He can undo the destruction and decay that began with the first sin in the garden.

“Lazarus, come out!” He commands Lazarus to come out of the grave and empowers the dead man to do so. That’s true for spiritual rebirth as well. God calls and we respond — walking out of our spiritual tombs tangled up in our grave clothes. By the Spirit, we are brought from death to life when we put our faith in Jesus.

Last week we saw Ezekiel’s vision of dry bones coming back to life. While Ezekiel may not have thought beyond Israel’s restoration, we can see that God intended the restoration of his whole creation. In the kingdom of God, all death will be defeated. The resurrection of Lazarus was just a preview. The king will sacrifice himself to put an end to human suffering and sin. Ultimately his resurrection will be a foretaste of our own.

Pray

If it’s helpful, use the following to begin your own prayer time with God.

Jesus, your love and compassion overwhelm me. Thank you that you have given us a preview of what your kingdom will be. I look forward in great hope to the day when sin and death are defeated.

Day 5

Happy Friday! It’s our day to reflect and worship. Let’s review, so we can put the pieces of our story together. We’ll also think about our place in God’s story.

The Story

Episode 1: God Creates

- **Key Verse:** So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

- Key Passages: Genesis 1–2
- Key Figures: Adam and Eve

Episode 2: God is rejected

- Key Verse: And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (Genesis 3:15)
- Key Passages: Genesis 3–11
- Key Figures: Adam, Eve, and Noah

Episode 3: God creates a family

- Key Verse: “He took him outside and said, ‘Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’” (Genesis 15:5)
- Key Passages: Genesis 12–21
- Key Figures: Abraham and Sarah

Episode 4: God rescues his people.

- The Lord said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them...” (Exodus 3:7–8)
- Key Book: Exodus
- Key Figure: Moses

Episode 5: God reigns

- Key Verse: “The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” 2 Samuel 7:11b–13
- Key Books: 1–2 Kings
- Key Figure: David

Episode 6: God Judges Rebellion.

- Key Verse: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is

an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13–14)

- Key Books: The Prophets
- Key Figures: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel

Episode 7: God Comes to Earth

Our picture has been slowly coming into focus. At first we could only see a vague outline of a shape, and then a blurry figure. God’s promise at the beginning of our story had us expecting a hero, an offspring of Eve who would come and rescue humanity. And every episode since has allowed us to sharpen the image, until at last, we can see him clearly.

The hero we’ve been looking for is the Jewish Messiah. He’s the eternal son of David, the King of kings, who welcomes all people into his kingdom to experience peace and blessing. He’s the Savior of the world, who rescues and redeems us from slavery to sin and death. As the Passover lamb and the suffering servant, he takes our sins upon himself. He is Jesus Christ. And we are finally at the point in our story will he will arrive – in a thoroughly unexpected way.

Kings belong in palaces and conquering heroes deserve much fanfare, but Jesus is born to an ordinary Jewish woman, in a stable, because there was no other available room. And while the angels trumpeted his arrival, they didn’t go to the kings of the earth to make their announcement. They invited common shepherds to meet the newborn king.

Although the Messiah’s arrival was long anticipated, there was very little about Jesus’ life that was expected. He taught with unprecedented authority, but was not part of the religious establishment. He healed the sick, raised the dead, ousted demons, and commanded the wind and the waves, but he held no office and owned no property. He never courted the favor of the elite, but loved the outcast, the marginalized, and the oppressed. He was the eternal Son in the flesh who pursued the lost and washed his disciples’ feet.

Jesus was the universal king who never claimed a region on earth to rule. Instead he brought the kingdom of God with him through his reign, and invited people into it. When we read the Gospels and witness the life of Jesus unfold, we can discover what his kingdom is like. It’s a place of love and justice ruled by an infinitely good and wise king. It’s the life that the Creator always intended us to have.

Where Adam and Israel rebelled, Jesus obeyed. The Son gave up his divine privileges, entered this world as a man, and submitted himself completely to the Father during his life. Where humanity always questioned God’s goodness and rejected his love and guidance, Jesus trusted him completely. His steadfast loyalty and love break the cycle of sin and rebellion that we’ve seen since throughout our story. And his death and resurrection, that we’ll witness in our next episode, will allow us to break it too.

The hero that whose face and form we now recognize will sacrifice his life to give us back ours.

Key Verse

Meditate on our key verse for the week. Allow the Spirit to speak to you through God's Word.

***“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”
Peter answered, “God’s Messiah.” (Luke 9:20)***

Finding your place in God's story

Ask the Spirit to guide you, then consider these questions. Ponder the ones that speak to you:

- As you reflect on what you've read this week, what's your biggest takeaway? First answer Jesus' question to Peter, who do you say that Jesus is? Then consider, how do the Gospel writers help us connect the Old Testament to the New? What does it mean that Jesus is the “New Adam” or the “New Israel”? How do his miracles and teaching help us understand what his kingdom is like?
- How did you see yourself reflected in the stories we read this week? For example? In what ways are you living like a citizen of Jesus' kingdom, and in what ways are you not? How could greater trust in God lead to obedience?
- For what do you want to praise and thank Jesus?
- What requests do you want to bring to Jesus?

Tune in Next Week:

At last we'll get to see Jesus! Our Messiah, Savior, and King makes his appearance next week! You don't want to miss it.