

**May 31, 2026**  
**Sermon Manuscript**

*To be read in conjunction with the handout in the bulletin or FOUND HERE:*

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jOIU0QY0VfHk2tXsdFFrpMOZCFhgqyok/view?usp=sharing>

VIDEO LINK HERE: <https://youtu.be/3x9cHDC5ZD0>

A Walk Through the Bible

So, this morning, on Trinity Sunday, we celebrate how God revealed through Jesus this mysterious, even paradoxical truth - that He is three persons, while being just one God: that God is Father, the Son, & the Holy Spirit, but these three persons are still one single God.

But this morning I want to zoom out even further beyond the ministry of Christ, to the *whole* history of God's salvation that is revealed to us in the Bible. For today's sermon, I want to do a walk through the story and contents of the Bible, which will take a bit longer than an average sermon, but I'm hopeful there will still be enough to keep your attention.

As you can see in your booklet, I have included many pages of information for those who learn or follow along best visually, but there is a lot of this information I won't explicitly cover. You'll notice that a good bit is in a gray font or ink, rather than black, like entire pages. Well, if you aren't super familiar with the Bible, I would recommend you completely ignore the gray stuff. The gray stuff is to fill in a little *more* detail for those who already have a pretty good working knowledge of the Bible. But if that's not you, stick to the black ink and look over the gray when you get home. For anyone, just absorb what jumps out to you and you can review the rest at a later time. And I'll try to mention page numbers as we go. #

The good news of the Bible is that God has drawn near to us as humans - to humankind - God has drawn near to humankind, inviting us into an eternal way of living with Him, in love toward Him and one another and all of creation. . And this good news begins to be revealed to us from page 1 of the Bible. The Bible comprises 66 books total, split into two parts - the Old & New Testaments. And the first part, the Old Testament, was written primarily in Ancient Hebrew. It is also the Holy Scriptures of the Jews, and so can also be called the Hebrew Scriptures. And *as you can see on the bottom of page 6* the Old Testament is divided up into three categories of books: History, Poetry & Wisdom Literature, and the Prophets.

**The Prologue**

So, jumping into the History books *on page 7*, the Old Testament begins (of course) with the Book of Genesis. And the first eleven chapters are a unique section of scripture often referred to as the Prologue. Genesis is the story of the Creation, which some Christians do interpret as God's material creation of the cosmos out of nothing, occurring over seven days and as recently as 6,000 years ago, while others draw from recent scholarship on the Hebrew word for 'create' to understand it as referring to God taking the already existing cosmos, which He's created billions of years ago, and appointing it for a particular purpose: as an arena to come into relationship with humankind, unique creatures with a mental capacity to know God.

Then, Genesis 2 & 3 describe the creation of Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden and their Fall into sin. Some understand their creation to be God making them from nothing, while others interpret them as being taken from among an already existing population of humans, while still others believe humans already existed, but God specially created Adam & Eve in the Garden. Whatever it is, in Adam & Eve God brings humans into relationship with Himself. In the Garden they enjoy loving communion with Him and one another, and God appoints them - and all subsequent humans - to rule the world on His behalf and,

as one scholar has said: harness all of its potential and create even more beauty and order.<sup>1</sup> This life He invites them into is essentially what Jesus will later call eternal living or life in the Kingdom of God. But God doesn't ever force himself on anyone - He respects our free will - and unfortunately (with some encouragement from Satan - the Biblical personification of evil - Adam & Eve exercise that free will to disobey God. And this event is known as the Fall, which introduces sin into the world (and the hearts of humankind). Sin refers to our tendency to go our own way apart from God and Adam & Eve are cast out of the Garden, which shows how sin creates a barrier in our relationship with God that will need to be remedied.

But a lot of people think that the reason the Bible exists is to describe how God remedies our sin, but in reality the Bible is primarily about God's purposes of coming into relationship with us, which sin does derail and then has to be dealt with, but the point of the Bible isn't the bad news we're sinners; it's the good news that God wants to be in relationship with us. The good news of the Bible is that God has drawn near to humankind, inviting us into an eternal way of living with Him, in love toward Him and one another and all of creation.

However, once sin has been introduced by the Fall, the rest - and really all - of the Old Testament does highlight the terrible realities of human sin and our need to be saved from it. Continuing in the Prologue, Cain's murder of his brother Abel demonstrates the terrible effects of sin on human relationships; like we saw last week, Babel shows the inadequacy of human societies and empires to promote the flourishing of all apart from God; and between those two stories, the flood demonstrate what humankind really deserves for its sinful rebellion against God. But, in sparing Noah & his family, we also see God pulling up short of giving humanity what we deserve and determining instead to save us: to redeem & restore humanity to relationship with Himself through a process that will span many centuries. ##

## The Patriarchs

So how does God set about to save humanity, to redeem us from our sin and restore us to the life with Him we were meant for? Well, He begins at Genesis chapter 12 by choosing a man, Abraham, and his eventual descendants who will become known as the Israelites (or Jews). Now, it's not that there was anything particularly unique about the Israelites - Abraham and his descendants - that caused God to choose them. Instead, God's purpose was just to pick *some* people to restore relationship with in order that all the other nations of the world would see the goodness of following God and be inspired to seek after Him themselves. However, as we'll see, more often than not the Israelites rebel against God just like Adam & Eve did.

So, Genesis 12-50 tracks God's dealings with the Patriarchs - Abraham and the three generations that follow: Isaac, Jacob, & Joseph. And it is the children of Jacob who become what are known as the twelve tribes of Israel. But, through Joseph God's people end up in Egypt.

## The Enslavement + the Wilderness journey toward the Promised Land

And over the 400 years or so in Egypt, the Israelites become very numerous, which causes the Egyptians to feel threatened and enslave them to keep them down. So God raises up Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery, through the parting of the Red Sea, and with the end goal of bringing them into the "Promised Land" called Canaan, (which is centered where the modern day nation state of Israel is). But on the way to the Promised Land (which ends up taking 40 years), God takes them to Mount Sinai where God makes a covenant with the Israelites. He gives them Ten Commandments, and He establishes priests to teach the people and also to make sacrifices in acknowledgement of their sin in a tent version of a temple called the Tabernacle that could be set up wherever they camped on their way to

<sup>1</sup> <https://bibleproject.com/videos/the-story-of-the-bible/>

the Promised Land, and where the presence of God would dwell (as you can see in the picture on the bottom of page 7).

So, all that God does through Moses at Mt Sinai is known as the Old Covenant (with Israel). A covenant is a relationship and agreement between God and humans. And the Old Covenant worked like this:

- 1) If the Israelites keep God's law (10 Commandments),
- 2) then they will enjoy the blessings of relationship with God

And the rest of the Old Testament is about God relating to His people on the basis of this Old Covenant, but the Old Testament shows time and again that humans can't keep our end of the bargain... and in the long run this will end up leading to God establishing a New Covenant with us Jesus: the one Israelite who did keep humanity's end of the bargain and who saves us through our trust in *His* faithfulness. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

### Conquest of Canaan

Well, onto page 8, after 40 years, Moses gets the Israelites to the border of the Promised Land of Canaan, where he dies and Joshua takes over to lead the twelve tribes of Israel into the Promised Land. However, the Lord had commanded them to conquer & drive out all of the inhabitants living there, lest they end up forsaking Him for those people's false gods. But the Israelites don't follow through, at least not fully, and as we move into the period of the Judges, we see God's concern become a reality time & again.

### The Period of the Judges

Judges is characterized by a repetitive cycle of God's people straying from following Him and God allowing another nation to oppress them for years, until they finally cry out to Him for rescue. So God raises up a judge - a leader - to deliver them. But as soon as the judge dies, they stray from God again and the cycle would start over. And this repetitive cycles reveals two patterns:

- First, so long as the Israelites stay faithful to God and do what He commands, things go well. If not, things didn't go well. (So #1 is stick with God.)
- And second, it shows the importance of righteous leadership: Without a leader who is faithful to God, the people will not be faithful to God.

### The United Kingdom 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, (1 & 2 Chronicles)

Well, speaking of leaders, as we move then into the books of Samuel and Kings, the Israelite people decide that they want to *be like* other nations, so they demand a king, (even though God says he is their king; empires have become the way of the world, like Babel). So God is probably rolling His eyes, but He establishes a monarchy, and under their second king, David they rise to prominence as a kingdom. But after David's rape of Bathsheba, things begin to go downhill. And, while there is the bright spot of David's son Solomon building the temple in Jerusalem, he and the subsequent kings develop a dangerous taste for foreign wives; dangerous because these wives tend to worship other gods and lead them away from God. And as the kings go into sin, so do the people (follow the leader).

### The Split Kingdoms 1&2 Kings, (2 Chronicles)

With their faithfulness compromised, God no longer holds the kingdom together and it is split in two. The ten tribes in the north are called Israel, while the two tribes in the south are called Judah. And both kingdoms follow their own king's lead, which is eventually further and further away from God. So, it is during this period that prophets become more prominent, as God would send them to call the kings

and people back to God. More on the prophets in a minute, but basically their calls to repentance never produces any consistent results.

So finally God says, “If you don’t want me and you take for granted the protection I afford you and the ways I provide for you.... I’ll remove it all and you’ll see what happens.” In 722 B.C., God’s removal of His protection leads to Assyrians defeating and exiling the Northern Kingdom (Israel). Then, [onto page 9](#), a century later the Southern Kingdom of Judah is defeated by the Babylonians, during three sieges between 604-586 B.C., which result in the Fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple. So essentially all of God’s people have been exiled from the Promised Land over 150 years. And interestingly, no historical record actually remains of what happened to the ten tribes after being exiled to Assyria. This is why they are known as “the lost tribes of Israel”.

### **Returning From Exile**

Well, after the Babylonian Empire falls to the Persians in 539 B.C., God moves on the heart of the Persian King Cyrus to decide to send the Jews back to their land and even pay for the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls and temple. And yet, even after God has done this and brought them back from exile - you guessed it - they still fall back into disobedience, because their hearts aren’t changed. That’s the problem with the Old Covenant - it says behave, but it doesn’t change the heart - our will & desires - which is where sin springs from.

So the Old Covenant has proven insufficient to lead people into the life of eternal living God has meant for us. But through His prophets God had begun to announce a Messiah who will come and change everything; because the good news of the Bible is that God has drawn near to humankind, inviting us into an eternal way of living with Him, in love toward Him and one another and all of creation.

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### **BOOKS of PROPHECY**

Well, before we get to the coming of Christ, I want to pause for a moment to say a few words about the other two categories of scripture we find in the Old Testament. First, the Prophets. A prophet is someone who hears messages from God to speak to the people. And prophets did exist before Israel became a monarchy. For example, Moses was considered the greatest prophet. But as I said, with the monarchy the prophets were used most often by God to call the kings & the people back from sin. Although, also for more positive purposes, such as encouraging the people (like when they were in exile) or to speak a word of God’s forgiveness. But most importantly, the prophets begin to prophesy God sending a Messiah, a savior. God begins to announce a new covenant that will come, which will finally bring full restoration of people to relationship with God, and the possibility of being able to live the way He created us to live, which will come by God forgiving us and beginning to change our hearts, all through our relationship to Christ and the power of His Holy Spirit.

### **Books of Poetry & Wisdom Literature**

Well, [turning to page 10](#), the final books that do not fall into the category of history or prophecy are typically grouped together under the category of Poetry & Wisdom. You have Job, which deals with how to make sense of human suffering and square that with a loving God; the Psalms are basically a hymnbook of praises and laments; Proverbs is a collection of wisdom, and there are also the books of Ecclesiastes & Song of Solomon

### **Between The Old and New Testaments**

Now, it is notable that the History books of the Old Testament break off at 433 BC, with many exiles having been returned to Jerusalem under Persian Rule. However, the New Testament will of

course not begin until A.D. So this leaves about 400 years of history and I've included a few **details of that time on the handout to fill in that gap**. But the upshot is that, by the time Jesus comes, Israel is under Roman occupation. But those 400 years are also considered a "silent period", when no new prophets of God emerged, until John the Baptist came on the scene to announce the coming of Jesus, the son of God. And it is through Jesus that the good news of the Bible culminates and comes to fruition: that God has drawn near to humankind, inviting us into an eternal way of living with Him, in love toward Him and one another and all of creation. ##

## THE FOUR GOSPELS

So we've made it to the New Testament. And I won't take as long here as the Old Testament. But while the Old Testament was written predominantly in ancient Hebrew, the New Testament was written in Ancient Greek. In the first century, Greek was the trade language. So, peoples would have their own language - for example, Jesus would have spoken Aramaic and also known Hebrew - but most people knew the common language of Greek (sort of like many people in the world know English today).

Now, just to avoid any confusion, we need to distinguish between *the four gospels* - Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John - and the gospel message. The word gospel comes from a Greek word meaning "good news". And the basic good news or gospel message is: The gospel message (of the Bible) is really what I've been repeating, but with a little more to add: that God has drawn near to humankind, inviting us into an eternal way of living with Him, in love toward Him and one another and all of creation. And while our sin is an obstacle to this, He has overcome that obstacle by sending His Son to do what we could not do for ourselves through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

So that *is the gospel message - the good news* - of how God saves us from being enslaved to sin and back into life with Him. But since none of this good news would be possible without Jesus (and what He did) - it is appropriate that these four books about Jesus are called *the Gospels*. **Turning to page 12, but notice its basically in gray; the summary is that...** In the four Gospel books - Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John - we're given the story of Jesus' birth, His public ministry & teachings - including His announcement of this eternal way of living He's inviting us into (also called the Kingdom of God), His death and resurrection - from each writer's own unique perspective and experience. But even though the Gospels are the most important part of the Bible - like they say, if you have to read just one book, read John - we spend a lot of time focusing on the Gospels on Sundays, so given that higher level of familiarity, we'll move alone.

## The Book of Acts

Turning to the book of Acts, or the Acts of the Apostles, this is written by St Luke as a sequel to His Gospel. **Just a brief overview of the chart on page 13:** As we've looked at the last two Sundays, Acts chapter 1 describes Jesus' ascension into heaven (40 days after His resurrection), and Acts chapter 2 describes the coming of the Holy Spirit ten days later. But the rest of the book recounts those earliest days of the Church. The Church (naturally) began as a bunch of converts from Judaism, and so their focus was sharing the gospel with other Jews. But then Paul has an encounter with Christ on the Road to Damascus and converts: he goes from being a zealous Jew and persecutor of Christians to becoming the 13th Apostle. And God makes clear that salvation is not just for Jews, but the Gentiles - non-Jews - as well. And the rest of Acts is focused primarily on the three missionary journeys of Paul, across the Roman Empire, where he establishes Churches composed of both Jews and Gentiles alike.

## The Epistles / Letters

And this leads us then to the final portion of the New Testament and the Bible which are the Epistles **and page 14**. Epistle is just a fancy word for 'letter', and these are letters written by different

Apostles, to either other leaders or to Churches in particular locales - such as Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus and so on - where these letters would be read to the whole congregation. And more than half of the Epistles in scripture were written by Paul. But the purpose of these letters - and what makes them so valuable for us - is that they are grappling with who exactly Jesus is (theologically) and what does it mean to live as a believer - to follow Him - in this age we live in after His Ascension. Once the dust had settled after Jesus' earthly ministry, the Apostles had a lot to sort out and get clear on about the implications of Jesus' teaching, of His death & resurrection, and what it really means for someone to believe in Him and grow in righteousness.

But there is one final letter I want to highlight in particular, which is included among the non-Pauline epistles [listed on page 15](#). And that is the book of Revelation. It is an apocalyptic vision that includes the end of God's story - or at least the final transition into our everlasting life with Him. But it has often been interpreted (mistakenly, in my opinion) as a script for exactly how the end times will play out, leading folks to connect world events with different verses that Revelation describes. Now this almost always bears bad fruit, because it is a distraction from our aim of loving God and others. Instead, the prophecy of Revelation is much better understood as providing a vivid imagery of *metaphors* for the reality that Jesus will triumph and Satan & evil will be vanquished, and that we who are in Christ can be sure we will enjoy life everlasting with God. **The good news of the Bible is that God has drawn near to humankind, inviting us into an eternal way of living with Him, in love toward Him and one another and all of creation.**

But, before I close, want to circle back to highlight something about that **good news**. We saw how in the Garden of Eden God's blessed purpose for humankind got derailed, but on [page 16](#) I have a chart that traces the steps God takes throughout the story of Scripture to restore His presence with humankind.

Once Adam & Eve's sin compromised human's connection with God, He begins restoring His presence & relationship with humankind through a particular people, the Israelites. Through the priestly system under Moses, God becomes present among them through the movable tabernacle, and then later in a fixed place of the Temple in Jerusalem, where people can go to a particular place to draw near to God's presence. But then, in the coming of Christ, God comes even closer, as a man dwelling among people. And yet, after Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension, He sends His Holy Spirit so that the presence of God is with believers - indeed, He dwells spiritually inside us and is with us - wherever we go. And yet, what awaits us still is the return of Jesus, when we will be raised from the dead and sin will be vanquished in full; and God will recreate the heavens and the earth; and as today's passage from Revelation promises: we will live in full view of the Lord and His glory, and all that was lost in Adam & Eve will be ours for eternity.

In the Name of the Father, the Son, & the Holy Spirit, Amen.