

The New Testament in 20 Minutes

2/2 Bible in 20 Minutes

2 Timothy 3:14-17

11 15 2009 Sam Jones Memorial United Methodist Church

PP1 MASTER SLIDE: BIBLE AND CANDLE (NO OTHER SLIDES)

Introduction

Oftentimes, it is difficult to know where to begin. Most stories adopt an arbitrary starting point. Even fairy tale introductions of “*Once upon a time*” have events that occurred beforehand.

So where does one begin with the story of **Jesus**? John decided to begin his Gospel at the very beginning. In Genesis 1:1, we hear: “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*” John introduced his gospel with the words: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.*”

Then in John 1:14, the gospel writer gave an abbreviated version of the Christmas story: “*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*” God’s Word in the flesh was Jesus the Christ.

Birth and Early Life

Out of the four gospels, only Matthew and Luke contain any details about Jesus’ birth. Both chose to include a **genealogy**—which is seldom interesting to anyone except a genealogist! Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience so he traced Jesus’ lineage back to Abraham—the “*Father of the Jews.*” Jesus was the Jewish messiah. However, Luke wrote to a broader audience that included non-Jews or Gentiles. He created a family tree that went all the way back to the very First Man, Adam. Christ was the Savior of the entire world.

Matthew and Luke combine to tell the familiar story of the first Christmas. The angel Gabriel visited a young virgin named Mary and told her that she would conceive and bear God’s son. Despite her questions and misgivings, Mary said, “*I am the Lord’s handmaiden.*” It took another angelic vision before her fiancé, Joseph, came around.

Due to a Roman census, the Holy Couple traveled to Bethlehem. Mary gave birth to her firstborn, a son; and they named him “**Jesus**” which means “*God saves.*” The angels proclaimed the news to shepherds in the nearby fields who came to see what the Lord had done. Later magi from the east also visited “*the king of the Jews.*”

However, the dark world fought against God’s light. King Herod feared a future rival for his throne. He ordered all the boys in the region two years and younger murdered. However, the Holy Family escaped through God’s providence and protection.

Then the story jumped ahead a decade to when Jesus was twelve years old. The entire family visited Jerusalem for the Passover feast. On the way home, Mary and Joseph realized that their son was missing. They searched for three days before they found him in the Temple sitting among the Jewish teachers. Jesus said: “*Didn’t you know*

I had to be in my Father's house?" It was a harbinger of things to come. And the boy grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and others.

John the Baptist, the Baptism of Jesus, and the Temptation

Another 18 years passed without mention. In fact, Mark began his gospel with the advent of **John the Baptist**. John appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. He was an Old Testament prophet declaring a New Testament coming. He foretold the arrival of the messiah or Christ.

One day Jesus appeared at the Jordan River and received John's **baptism**. The Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove. And a voice from the heavens declared: *"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

Then Jesus went into the wilderness where he fasted and prayed for 40 days. At the end of this time, the devil came to Jesus and **tempted** him in three different ways. Jesus resisted each temptation by quoting the Scriptures. So the devil left him . . . until a more opportune time.

Jesus' Public Ministry

Jesus emerged from the wilderness and began his public ministry. Out of the hundreds who followed him, he chose twelve men to become his inner circle of **apostles**. Over the next three years, they traveled across Galilee, Judea, and Samaria.

Mark summarized the heart of Jesus' message: *"**The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the gospel!**"*

Jesus taught the crowds with memorable **parables** or stories such as: The Prodigal Son, The Good Samaritan, The Mustard Seed, The Lost Coin, The Sower and the Seed, the Talents, The Lost Sheep, and so many more.

When asked to choose the most important commandment out of the hundreds in the Hebrew Scripture, Jesus said: *"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you will love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And the second is like the first: Love your neighbor as yourself."*

In addition to his preaching and teaching, Jesus healed the sick and exorcised the possessed. He performed miracles: turning water into wine, walking on water, calming the storm, the feeding of the 5,000, and raising Lazarus from the dead.

According to John's Gospel, the resurrection of Lazarus was the final straw for the Jewish officials. They feared the entire nation would be won over to Jesus' cause; and there was no telling what the Roman armies would do. So they began to plot Jesus' death.

Holy Week

On **Palm Sunday**, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. The crowds covered his path with palm branches and cloaks. They shouted, *"Hosanna!"* Many thought God's kingdom was about to be established on earth. Few suspected that the triumphal parade would become a death march.

On Thursday night, Jesus shared a **Last Supper** with his disciples. During the Passover meal, Jesus infused the bread and wine with new meaning. He said, *"This bread*

is my body which is given for you. This wine is the blood of the new covenant that is shed for you.”

Following supper, Jesus and his disciples went to the Garden of Gethsemane. One of the apostles, Judas Iscariot, betrayed his master for 30 pieces of silver. During a mock trial before the Jewish court, Jesus was beaten and insulted. Then they carried him to the Roman governor, Pontus Pilate. Despite finding Jesus innocent of all charges, Pilate sentenced him to death.

They marched Jesus outside the city gates to a place called Golgotha—the Place of the Skull. Then . . . they . . . crucified . . . him From noon until mid-afternoon, the sky darkened—all of creation veiled its sight as the Son of God died. The Lord prayed: *“Father, forgiven them, they know not what they do.”* Later Jesus cried out, *“It is finished!”* Then he died. As night neared, a Roman soldier plunged a spear into his side before cutting him loose from the cross.

Some of Jesus’ disciples buried him in a new tomb carved out of a cave. A large stone sealed the entrance, and Roman soldiers guarded the burial place. Jesus of Nazareth: *“crucified, dead, and buried.”*

The Resurrection and Ascension

But on the third day Early on Sunday morning some of the women walked through the predawn darkness to Jesus’ tomb. When they arrived, they discovered that the stone—which was very large—had been rolled away from the tomb. Then an angelic messenger said to them: *“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here—he has risen! Now go and tell his disciples.”* The women ran to share the good news that continues to echo in our ears this day.

Later in the morning Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and then Simon Peter. On the road to Emmaus, two other disciples saw him. On Easter night, Jesus joined the gathered disciples in an upper room. Time and again Jesus appeared to his disciples over the next forty days. Hundreds witnessed the resurrected Lord.

On his final day among them, Jesus gathered the apostles outside of Jerusalem. He told them to wait in the city, saying: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.”*

They watched as Jesus **ascended into heaven**, where he sits *“at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.”*

The Acts of the Apostles

For the next ten days, the disciples faithfully met together in worship and prayer. On **Pentecost** Sunday, a sound like a violent wind filled the house. They saw what looked like tongues of fire that rested upon each of them. Then they were filled with the **Holy Spirit**. The apostles burst out of the room to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Peter preached a powerful sermon about God’s saving power. Over 3,000 joined the Way that day. The believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. The Holy Spirit did many wonders

and miracles in their midst. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

When two or more are gathered, however, politics soon emerge. A conflict arose between the Hebraic Jews and the Grecian Jews over the care of their widows. So the apostles appointed seven Godly men to serve as **deacons** of the church. Chief among them was a man named Stephen.

From the start, Jerusalem's religions and political leaders attempted to squash the movement. Church leaders and members were persecuted and imprisoned. A devout Pharisee named **Saul** arose as one of the church's chief opponents. When Stephen was arrested and then stoned to death, Saul personally approved his murder.

Saul even sought approval to go to other cities to extend the persecution of the church. On the road to Damascus, however, Saul encountered the risen Lord. The persecutor became an apostle. God ordained Saul—also known as **Paul**—to serve as his apostle to the Gentiles or non-Jews.

Paul began his ministry with Barnabas in the city of Antioch. It was in Antioch that members of the Way were first called "**Christians**." However, Paul felt a burning fire within to spread the gospel to other people and places. Over the next years, he took three or four extended missionary journeys around the Mediterranean basin. He founded a number of churches along the way.

Eventually Paul was arrested in Jerusalem. Over the next months and years, he progressed from one court to the next until he finally arrived in Rome. He planned to present his case to the emperor himself and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Acts ends before the trial took place. However, legend has it that Paul was beheaded for the faith.

The Letters

Paul established a number of churches during his missionary travels. He taught the believers and appointed church leaders. However, they often had questions, concerns, and conflicts. So Paul wrote a series of pastoral letters to the various congregations. The letters or epistles form a large part of the New Testament story. In order, they include:

- Romans
- 1 & 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 & 2 Thessalonians
- 1 & 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon

The letters deal with a variety of theological and moral issues. Depending upon the situation, Paul encourages, exhorts, chastises, or condemns. However, there is one central theme that runs through all his letters: salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. God has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. At the cross, our sin was put to death. At the empty tomb, we were raised to new life. Those who receive God's gift enter into eternal life.

The next two books of the New Testament are Hebrews and James. Hebrews is a weighty, theological treatise while James is a call to practical Christianity. In truth, they are more sermons than letters—you know how sneaky preachers can be!

The next books are 1 and 2 Peter—two letters written by Simon Peter himself. He addresses how the church should deal with external persecution and internal conflict. These are followed by 1, 2, and 3 John which can be summarized in a single word: love. Love God and love neighbor. The final letter is Jude—a one chapter book warning against the dangers of false teachers in the church.

Revelation

The final book of the New Testament is “*The Revelation of John*” which is normally shortened to “*Revelation*.” The Roman Empire exiled John to the salt mines on the island of Patmos because of his Christian faith. One day he received a strange and terrific vision from God.

The book begins with seven letters addressed to the seven churches of Asia Minor. They face both persecution from the Romans and internal conflicts. Some are praised and others chastised but all are called to a higher faith. Then John shares his vision of the final days of the earth. The letter is filled with strange and wondrous signs, portents, and symbols. Many have struggled over the years to interpret their meaning.

However, there is a central, simple message that emerges for the church then and now. GOD WINS! Regardless of what we face and how hopeless the situation, God’s people are ultimately triumphant. John concludes with the Greek word “*maranatha*” which is a simple prayer that means “*Come, Lord Jesus.*”

Conclusion

The Old Testament begins with God speaking creation into being. The New Testament begins with God’s Word becoming flesh. From Genesis to Revelation, we hear the story of God’s saving acts.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. In Christ, we are new creations, saved FROM sin and death FOR forgiveness and life.

God’s story and our stories interweave in the story of salvation. It is much more than the greatest story ever told—the Bible tells of God’s power to save.

Amen.