

Ninth Story of Creation to Culmination: The Holy Spirit, the Worldwide Church, and Jesus' Promised Return

First Third:

Express joy in Christ together

Vision 100

Questions:

How are you doing?

How did you obey last week's teaching?

Who are you witnessing to?

Who has come to faith? Are they witnessing to those in their circle?

Who are you training to become a reproducing disciple? Are they training others?

Second Third:

Pray briefly for God to open up His message to us.

DO stick to the story.

DON'T talk about politics; DON'T chase rabbit trails; DON'T focus on minor points in the passage.

DON'T talk about religion. DON'T dominate the conversation.

This is a true story from the Bible.

After His resurrection, Jesus remained with His disciples forty days. He then promised them:

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

Jesus then was lifted up, and a cloud took him away. Two angels then appeared who told the disciples that Jesus would come back in the same way they saw him go.

Just as Jesus promised, a few days later the Holy Spirit filled these men with power. They publicly proclaimed the mighty works of God in Jerusalem to the many who had come from different countries for a Jewish festival. And every person present heard the disciples speaking in his own language!

One of the disciples, Peter, boldly stood up and said all this was prophesied hundreds of years previously. He continued:

"This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. . . .³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:32, 33, 36-41)

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the disciples (now called apostles) bore witness to Him in Jerusalem, then in the surrounding areas of Judea and Samaria. God brought to repentance many in these places. Then God sent apostles to peoples far and wide. Many were beaten or imprisoned. Some were killed. But God began to fulfill His promises to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob that all nations would be blessed through their offspring, Jesus.

Before He died, Jesus had told His disciples that He would return. He said:

This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. . . . They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of

heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matthew 24:14, 30b-31)

Near the end of the Apostle John's life, he wrote the book of Revelation, which in part tells of Jesus' return. John sees a vision of those from every tribe and tongue and people and nation worshipping God the Father and Jesus, fulfilling the promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He also hears loud voices in heaven proclaiming that God's promise to David is fulfilled:

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." (Revelation 11:15)

King Jesus then fulfills the promise to Eve by crushing Satan and condemning all people who have rejected Jesus' offer of salvation:

The devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:10)

If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:15)

But for His people, for those whose sins were covered by Jesus' sacrifice, God has prepared a new home:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. . . . And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."⁶ And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment."⁷ The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son." (Revelation 21:1, 3-7)

Jesus' last words in the Bible are these:

"Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:20)

This is the final, true story from the Bible.

Have someone read the story, and then another person tell it.

What does this story tell us about God? About His promises? Remember again the promise to Eve in the Garden, the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the promise to David, and the promises given through the prophet Isaiah.

What does this story tell us about Jesus?

What does this story tell us about the Holy Spirit?

What does this story tell us about Satan?

What does this story tell us about men? About the disciples/apostles?

Who do you identify with in this story?

Are there sins to avoid? Promises to claim? Examples to follow? Commands to obey?

Last Third:

Practice telling the story

What will you do differently this week because of this story?

Who will you witness to or share this story with next week?