



ONE *story*

FROM SHADOWS TO SUBSTANCE

VOLUME THREE
GOSPELS & ACTS - EPISTLES

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One Story: From Shadows to Substance, Volume Three

David Holcomb

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1855 Lewisville-Clemmons Road

Clemmons, NC 27012

riveroakschurch.org

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FOREWORD

Dear Friends,

Thank you for being part of our *One Story* study as we consider God's great plan for his people, from beginning to end, in Scripture. So far this year, we have covered the Old Testament Books of Law, History, Poetry, and Prophets. Though written over many centuries by authors from different walks of life, these Old Testament books combine to build an expectation for God's people. They leave us looking for an answer—something more, something greater. That answer is found in the New Testament.

The New Testament begins with the Gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John give us the remarkable record of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection. They reveal Christ's challenging teachings and his miracle-working power. They show us his wisdom, compassion and sinless life. They verify that he was more than a mere man—he was God become man.

The Book of Acts gives us the account of the early Christian church, and teaches us what can happen when God empowers his people to take the message of Jesus' salvation to the world. The letters, or epistles, of the New Testament provide us with a clear understanding of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. They teach us how to live as followers of Jesus. The Book of Revelation, while challenging to understand with its rich symbolism, teaches us what is ahead for those who follow the Lamb of God.

It is our hope that this study will better equip you to share the message of Jesus' saving work with friends and family who do not yet know him. We also hope the study will help you see the unity of Scripture and the contribution of both Old and New Testaments to God's eternal plan for his people. Above all, we hope it will help you to know the Lord better and love Him more.

In His great love,



David Beaty

Pastor, River Oaks Community Church

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is often viewed as a collection of books—a series of stories loosely tied together with Scripture cross-references and common religious language. That could not be any farther from the reality of what we have been gifted and what we have available to us in this one-of-a-kind, fully authoritative, completely inerrant Word of God.

The Bible is actually one book—one amazing work of literature—historical, theological, and anthropological. It is the one story of redemption...one harmonious, unified narrative of deliverance and salvation that has emerged from a diversity of authors, circumstances, and literary forms. It is a miracle of inspiration and preservation that provides us with the progressive revelation of God's character and his plan to reconcile fallen creation to himself.

Every page, every passage, and every book of the Bible moves the one story of redemption forward. It is our prayer that this *One Story* study will bring greater insight to these forward movements, helping to put the pieces together in a meaningful, life-changing way.

In *Volume One* we began with the beginning. The books of the Law and History helped to lay the foundation for the story. We observed the continuous narrative of God's people as the story was advanced each week, and—in doing so—we discovered many Old Testament shadows of the One who is the substance in God's grand plan of redemption: Jesus—the Christ, Messiah, and Savior—the One who is central to the entirety of this *one story*.

In *Volume Two*, we explored the works of biblical wisdom, poetry, and song, as well as the recorded life and ministry of

God's chosen prophets. These unique collections moved the narrative forward while reinforcing the account already covered. These inspired and anointed works gave—and continue to give—evidence to God's character and his work in our world.

In both of the previous volumes, there was a significant level of emphasis on the shadows—the many Old Testament references, allusions, copies, and types that prefigure the coming Messiah—Jesus. As the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Colossae, these shadows, while pointing us to Jesus, are incomplete and infinitely inferior copies of the substance found in Christ.

In *Volume Three*, the substance we have in Christ is revealed! The new covenant of the law, the ultimate deliverance from sin, the once-for-all atonement sacrifice.... these—and all the other shadows—are made incarnate, fully-human and fully-divine, as the advent of Jesus introduces us to the section of the One Story we refer to as the New Testament.

The Gospels of the New Testament describe the good news of Jesus' birth, ministry, and resurrection. The narrative continues with the Acts of the Apostles and the unbelievable invitation that you and I have—equipped with the Holy Spirit's presence—to enter and participate in his global church.

The final chapters of God's One Story take us through the many inspired Epistles—or letters—of the apostles. These conclude with the Revelation of John, reminding us that, while the One Story preserved for us within Scripture closes at this point, the final chapter of God's redemptive plan is yet to come. More on each of these sections is included in the following pages.

As a reminder, this series is not an attempt to teach the books of the Bible as a survey or biblical book course. However, as we follow the story of redemption from cover to cover, you are encouraged to take the opportunity to become more familiar with each of these divinely-inspired authors and books, with the intention of gaining greater understanding of the dates, people, and events.

The guidebook for *One Story* has been created primarily as a supplement to the Sunday morning teaching and a prompt for personal time of study and devotion. It includes a unit for each week of the 2020 summer/fall sermon series (July 26-December 30). We encourage you to listen online should you miss a week, in order to experience the full benefit of the unfolding narrative.

In addition, small groups will utilize the *One Story* guides to aid discussion, discovery, and discipleship within their weekly gatherings. Central to these times of community growth in God's Word will be the process of observing, asking questions, interpreting Scripture, reflecting, and applying the designated passages, while gaining insight into the particular context of the weekly passage against those of prior and future weeks.

However you choose to utilize this guide, may this season be one of deep biblical literacy—learning, loving, and living out God's Word. May we all desire to know God better and love him more as we delight in the sweetness and richness of all that he has revealed of himself, and all that he has expected of us in response. May we marvel at the shadows as we worship the Substance.

Because He lives,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Holcomb". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent initial "D".

David Holcomb

Discipleship Pastor, River Oaks Community Church

Redemption: Refers to a deliverance and the price paid for that deliverance. We are redeemed (delivered) from the penalty of sin by the price Jesus paid on the cross. The whole Bible, whether the Old Testament or the New Testament, looks to the mighty redemptive act of Christ.

Bruce Wilkerson & Kenneth Boa
Talk thru the Bible

These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

Colossians 2:17

THE GOSPELS AND ACTS

*Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and
the Acts of the Apostles*

The Gospels and the Book of Acts can collectively be thought of as historical books depicting key events in the life of Christ, the foundation of the church, and the early missionary-driven spread of Christianity.

The term, “The Gospel of…” was placed as a title heading for Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the early centuries—likely as a result of Mark 1:1, which says: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” The term “gospel” comes from the Greek word “εὐαγγέλιον” (eu-a-gel-ion), meaning “proclamation of good news.” It is where we get the English word “evangelism.” The original designation—or titles—for these documents, however, was simply, “According to Matthew” (for example), and each seemed to be written in the form of a biography, according to the perspective of the one writing. Each author was inspired to provide a different slant to the person, deity, and ministry of Jesus and his church. Each wrote of the Jesus he knew and wanted others to know.

The Book of Acts is perhaps more completely termed, “The Acts of the Apostles.” Since it is a continuation of the biographical and historical record according to Luke, Acts is—in a very real way—2 Luke. Though Acts does seem to follow a consistent chronological structure, chronology was not generally a matter of importance to first-century authors. We should not, therefore, expect the biographical nature of the Gospels to be similar to our modern biographies in that respect.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are Synoptic Gospels—or writings of similar and shared content. John is unique and distinctly John (see chart on the next page). Though much of the content in the Gospels is similar, we notice often-pronounced variations in both the styles and the perspectives of the writers. This is intentional, and especially strong evidence of the inspired nature of the records.

Finally, in the spirit of the *One Story* study, the Gospels are filled with many connections to the Old Testament. These connections are reminders that the Gospels, the New Testament, and even Jesus, are not simply points of new beginnings; they are the fulfillment of prophecy, the continuation of themes, and the substance of shadows, all of which have been revealed by God throughout the Old Testament.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO...

ACCORDING TO...	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
WRITTEN TO:	Jews	Romans	Greeks/ Gentiles	All Nations
CHRIST AS	King	Servant	Savior/ Messiah	Son of God
HIGHLIGHTS	Sermons	Actions	Parables	Allegories
TONE:	Prophetic	Practical	Historical	Spiritual
KEY WORD	Fulfilled	Immediately	Son of Man	Believe
OT QUOTES	53	36	25	20
OT ALLUSIONS	76	27	42	105

THE EPISTLES

*Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians,
Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians,
1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy,
Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter,
1, 2, and 3 John, Jude, Revelation*

The Epistles (including Revelation) comprise the final twenty-two books of God's One Story. A majority of these letters were written by the apostle Paul. However, we also have letters from James, Peter, John, Jude, and one that is anonymous (Hebrews).

As we read the Epistles, we are reminded that we have been granted access to private conversations and personal correspondence that occurred at a real time, in a real place—inspired “mail” written for us, but not to us. This realization requires us to be especially intentional about the historical, cultural, and scriptural context. These letters cannot mean today what they did not mean to the original audience. If we manipulate the meaning, we are in danger of misusing the message.

Additionally, we observe that many of these letters were written within a larger dialogue between the apostles and various churches and individuals. We are dropped into this dialogue, and must depend on the Holy Spirit's insight and our commitment to disciplined study in order to fully comprehend the intended teaching, which is often one of spiritual encouragement, conviction for ungodly behavior and belief, or expressions of doctrine, worship, and praise.

The Epistles provide a view into the early church and, as with all of Scripture, a view of God's character. They move the One Story along by providing a link between Jesus and his people. In the Epistles, we find more detailed instruction for confessing belief in God and receiving his gift of grace as assurance of our salvation and our eternal dwelling place (which the final book of the Bible addresses).

Revelation. The final work of the New Testament is one of apocalyptic literature delivered as a letter “to the seven churches that are in Asia” (Revelation 1:4). While there is much to understand or misunderstand in Revelation, the key principles are fairly straightforward. A suggested approach is:

- Be reserved. There is imagery, symbolism, and historical background to this genre that is neither literal nor precise.
- Know that this epistle is as much poetic prophecy as it is straight prophetic work. Again, this is an early form of literature for which most of us have little exposure.
- Keep it simple. Revelation is a book that shouts, “CHRIST JESUS WINS!”
- Be encouraged. A key motivation to John’s letter is to provide hope to those in the midst of struggle and pain. God is on his throne and he will complete his great plan of redeeming his creation.

The beauty of Revelation is found in the tabernacle, or literally, God’s dwelling place. God first dwelt with us in the garden of Eden, then through the tent of meeting among Israel. Later, his presence was established in the temple of worship in Jerusalem, and eventually, God incarnate dwelt with us through the life and ministry of Jesus. For those who believe, the tabernacle of God dwells within them by way of the Holy Spirit. Revelation makes clear that one day the eternal, permanent tabernacle of God will be experienced and enjoyed in a new heaven and new earth.



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”

Revelation 21:3

BOOKS OF



volume one

The Law

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

Books of History

Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther



volume two

Poetry & Wisdom

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon

The Prophets

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

OLD TESTAMENT

THE BIBLE



volume three

The Gospels and Acts

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

Acts

The Epistles

Romans

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Galatians

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossians

1 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians

1 Timothy

2 Timothy

Titus

Philemon

Hebrews

James

1 Peter

2 Peter

1 John

2 John

3 John

Jude

Revelation

ONE
story



volume one



volume two



volume three

NEW TESTAMENT

1

Good News ... The Redeemer is Among Us!

MATTHEW 4:1-17

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”—Matthew 4:17



ONE STORY CONTEXT:

The book of _____ is one of _____ books included in the section of the Bible commonly referred to as _____. It was written by _____ and the words, or phrase, that come to mind in describing this book include: _____

OBSERVE:

Describe the setting of this passage. Imagine yourself in the passage. What do you see, hear, feel? Look for repeated or emphasized words, new characters, relationships, locations. Write down all of your observations.

BE CURIOUS:

Based on your observations, what questions do you have? What questions might others have?

INTERPRET:

Use the context of the passage (including the surrounding passages and other Scripture) to answer the questions you listed. Summarize the “big idea” of this passage in one sentence.

REFLECT:

How does this passage move the one story of redemptive history forward? Are these the words of, or about, Jesus? Does God reveal anything about his character? Why might this passage be included in Scripture?

APPLY:

How does this passage challenge your view of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) and others? How does this unit challenge your previous understanding of this passage, or even this book of the Bible?

RESPOND:

Is there a command or instruction to obey? How does your study this week change what you will do, think, or say tomorrow?

RETAIN:

The one major takeaway from this passage that you would want to share with others is:



Now, share it with at least one “other.”

NOTES:

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2

Good News ... The Healer is Among Us!

MARK 1:29-45

That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons —Mark 1:32-34a



ONE STORY CONTEXT:

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Describe the setting of this passage. Imagine yourself in the passage. What do you see, hear, feel? Look for repeated or emphasized words, new characters, relationships, locations. Write down all of your observations.

BE CURIOUS:

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RESPOND:

Is there a command or instruction to obey? How does your study this week change what you will do, think, or say tomorrow?

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3

Good News ... The Teacher is Among Us!

LUKE 6:27-42

But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. ... And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. —Luke 6:27, 31



ONE STORY CONTEXT:

The book of _____ is one of _____ books included in the section of the Bible commonly referred to as _____. It was written by _____ and the words, or phrase, that come to mind in describing this book include: _____

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Describe the setting of this passage. Imagine yourself in the passage. What do you see, hear, feel? Look for repeated or emphasized words, new characters, relationships, locations. Write down all of your observations.

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4

Good News ... The Life-Giver is Among Us!

JOHN 11:1-27

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"
—John 11:25-26



ONE STORY CONTEXT:

The book of _____ is one of _____
books included in the section of the Bible commonly
referred to as _____. It was written by
_____ and the words, or phrase, that come to
mind in describing this book include: _____

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5

The First Christian Church

ACTS 2:14-24, 36-46

So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. —Acts 2:41-42



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6

The Bottom Line

ROMANS 3:19-28, 5:1-15

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. —Romans 3:23-24



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7

Many Members, One Body

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. —1 Corinthians 12:12-13



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8

Abraham's Family Tree

GALATIANS 3:1-14

Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.—Galatians 3:7-9



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9

In Him, We Have ...

EPHESIANS 1:3-20

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ. —Ephesians 1:7-9



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10

Motivated by the Prize

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-16

But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

—Philippians 3:13b-14



ONE STORY CONTEXT:

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11

Old Self vs. New Self

COLOSSIANS 3:1-17

But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. —Colossians 3:8-10



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12

Beware the Night

1 THESSALONIANS 5:1-11, 23-24

So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. —1 Thessalonians 5:6-8



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13

Training in Godliness

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-16

Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. —1 Timothy 4:7-8



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14

Living in the "One-Another"

PHILEMON 1-25

I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints. —Philemon 4-5



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15

Shadows of Sacrifices Come Full Circle

HEBREWS 10:1-18

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. —Hebrews 10:12-14



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16

No Works? Dead Faith.

JAMES 2:14-26

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ... For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead. —James 2:14, 26



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Our Hope is Alive

1 PETER 1:3-12

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you. —1 Peter 1:3-4



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18

The Qualities of an Effective Life

2 PETER 1:1-11

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. —2 Peter 1:5-8



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19

Perfect Love

1 JOHN 4:7-21

We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother. —1 John 4:19-21



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Mercy to All ... The Same, but Different

JUDE 1-2, 17-25

And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh. —Jude 22-23



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Back to the Beginning!

REVELATION 21:1-4, 22:1-5

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.
—Revelation 21:1



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Come, Lord Jesus

REVELATION 22:6-21

“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” ... He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!
—Revelation 22:16, 20



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