

**Big Picture - Chapter 5**

# **Gospels**

## Overview Review

1. The Law
2. Books of History
3. Books of Poetry
4. Books of Prophecy
5. **Gospels**
  - a. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
  - b. Books are records of Jesus' life from four different perspectives
  - c. Timeframe is the 33 years of Jesus' life
6. Acts and Letters

**Where are we?** God created everything. He chose one man from whom a huge family descended. That family was His chosen people, the Israelites. After four generations of freedom, the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt for 400 years until God freed them. He brought them into a land of good and plenty, but they disobeyed Him so He sent them into exile in accordance with His prophecy to Moses.<sup>1</sup> After a time, He restored a few to the Promised Land, but Israel never again became the glorious kingdom that God promised.

If we survey the scene from this point in history, we observe that the Jews have seen only limited fulfillment of God's promises. As they eagerly look forward to the final fulfillment, they balance on the edge of their seats, expecting a Messiah to come at any moment to lead them back to world power and fulfill the rest of God's promises. Incredibly, God's plan was even bigger. The four **Gospels** present the Messiah, but He's beyond the Jews' comprehension.

**What were those covenants again?** God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob *land*, lots of offspring ("*seed*"), and that they would be a *blessing* for all nations. Through Moses, God promised the Israelites victory and plenty...IF they would obey. But they didn't. God also promised David a *house* (dynasty or lineage), a *kingdom* (people ruled by a king) and a *throne* (authority of the king to rule) *forever*. Lastly, God promised yet another covenant, a "New Covenant"<sup>2</sup>: "*I will be their God, and they shall be my people... For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*" Is it really possible for God to accomplish all these things that He has promised?

**Why are there different accounts of Jesus' life?** Have you ever spoken with several witnesses of the same event? Their accounts invariably differ in some way because of their individual perspective on the event and their purpose for telling the story. If you take each of their accounts and put them together, you'll get the most complete picture possible.

**Why four Gospels?** Both the OT and NT require the testimony of *two or three witnesses* for a claim to be valid. Like three witnesses, Matthew, Mark and Luke are similar in their stories and flow. Together they are called the "synoptic gospels," meaning they are "able to be seen together." With his focus on Jesus' identity, John differs significantly from the others. John includes only seven "sign" miracles that testify to Jesus' identity and follows each with a related discussion revealing specific truth about Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 15:13, Exodus 12:40

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-34

**Have all four Gospels ever been rearranged into one chronological story?** Yes! A compilation of all four perspectives of Jesus' life (Matthew's, Mark's, Luke's and John's) is called a *harmony* of the gospels and we'll use such a harmony to examine Jesus' death and resurrection.

**Who was John the Baptist?** Into the shadow of all these promises and after 400 years of silence, one last prophet, John the Baptist, steps onto the stage. Dressed in camel's hair and eating locusts and wild honey, John paves the way for Jesus by urging the people to repent from their sins and be baptized. When Jesus arrives among John's crowd, John recognizes Him as the *Lamb of God*. However, when Jesus doesn't rise to earthly kingship as John expects, even John begins to doubt Jesus' identity. In response, Jesus points to the miraculous signs He has done, signs that were prophesied in the OT: "*the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.*"<sup>3</sup> And He encourages John to believe.

As a reminder, **pray** then consider the following questions each day:

1. What happens? (major characters, events, places)
2. What does it say about God? About Jesus?
3. What questions does it raise?
4. How should I respond?

**Snapshot of the gospels<sup>4</sup>:**

	<b>Matthew</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Luke</b>	<b>John</b>
<b>Role of author</b>	Apostle	Disciple of Peter	Traveled with Paul	Apostle
<b>Occupation</b>	Tax collector	Missionary	Physician	Fisherman
<b>Date of writing</b>	AD 50s or 60s	Before AD 64	Before AD 64 but after Mark	Late first century
<b>Representative text</b>	21:5	10:45	19:10	20:31
<b>Prominent role of Christ</b>	Preacher	Miracle worker	Teller of parables	Teacher
<b>Audience</b>	Jews	Romans	Greeks	Everyone
<b>Prominent nature of book</b>	Fulfillment of OT messianic prophecy	Fast-paced action	Detailed history	Identity of Jesus (7 "I am's")

**What questions do you have?**

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 11:5

<sup>4</sup> From Gerry Mathisen, *Cover to Cover, Getting the Bible's Big Picture* (InterVarsity Press), p. 30.

Read...	Summarize...	Notes, comments, questions
<b><i>1. Jesus' birth &amp; beginning of His ministry</i></b>		
<i>Matt 1</i>		Underline or write down all the names of people in Jesus' lineage whom you recognize.
<i>Matt 2</i>		
<i>Mark 1:1-13</i>		Review the chart on the background of each gospel and note Mark's style.
<i>Luke 1</i>		
<i>Luke 2</i>		Note Mary's response to all these events (2:19, 31).  Was Jesus liked by people? (2:52)
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Key Verse:</b>	
<b>Take away:</b>		
<b><i>2a. John the Baptist, Jesus' temptation</i></b>		
<i>John 1:1-34</i>		What stands out about John's account in contrast to the others'?
<i>Isaiah 40:3</i>		
<i>Matt 3</i>		What is John's role?
	<i>Please continue...</i>	

**Why did Jesus do miracles at all?** Do you recall Isaiah's prophecy, that "*the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy*"?<sup>5</sup> Isaiah mentions such miracles elsewhere as well. The Jews of Jesus' day expected to see such "signs" to confirm the Messiah's identity. Also, prophets like Elijah and Elisha, who were clearly accepted as men sent by God, did miracles of healing and raising the dead. Everyone knew God had accomplished these miracles through these men.

So when Jesus came, doing works similar to God's prophets, works specifically mentioned in Isaiah, no honest person could deny that He was sent by God and God was working through Him. Even today, the miracles give credibility to Jesus' claims of Who He is so that we can believe what He says.

Since we have read about the end times, it should be noted that, "*The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders...*"<sup>6</sup> So we do need to "*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits.*"<sup>7</sup> So today if someone is doing miracles similar to Jesus we need to **beware and evaluate their life** for evidence of God's character-transforming presence that leads others to Jesus.

**Why does John record so few miracles?** John makes the statement that he writes specifically "*that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name* (John 20:31). John has a very specific purpose for each of the seven miraculous signs he includes. For example, the first miracle is a re-creation of water such that it becomes wine. His purpose is to show that Jesus has creative power, much like God Himself.

After this first miracle, John states simply that Jesus' disciples "believed in Him" (John 2:11).

With each subsequent miracle, we do well to ask, "Why did John include this miracle? What does it teach us about Jesus? and How did people react to Him?"

After some of the other miracles, we find "discourses" (sermons) Jesus gave that tied into the miracle and explained a truth about Himself. It is helpful to read these discourses through the lens of "How do the preceding miracles prepare us for the discourse that follows?" and "What is John saying about Jesus here?"

**What questions do you have?**

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<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 35:5-6

<sup>6</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:9

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 7:15-16

Read...	Summarize...	Notes, comments, questions
<b>2b. John the Baptist, Jesus' temptation, continued</b>		
<i>Luke 3</i>		What did God Himself say about Jesus?
<i>Matt 4:1-11</i>		What do you notice about the use of the OT during Satan's temptation of Jesus?
<i>Optional: Malachi 4:5-6 Matt 17:10-13</i>		
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Key Verse:</b>	
<b>Take away:</b>		
<b>3. Jesus' miracles, Part 1 - signs and purpose</b>		
<i>John 20:30-31</i>	Purpose statement	This is John's purpose statement for his whole book (and arguably the entire Bible). Why has this all been written?
<i>John 2:1-22</i>		What does this miracle tell us about Jesus?  What was the result of this miracle?
<i>John 4:46-54</i>		What does this miracle tell us about Jesus?
<i>Luke 5:17-26</i>		What was Jesus trying to prove by healing the man? (What did Jesus say to him?)
<i>Optional: John 6:1-13 John 6:25-40</i>		How does Jesus use this miracle to communicate something about Himself? What is He saying?
<i>Optional Mark 1:21-45</i>		What does Jesus do in between days filled with people?
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Key Verse:</b>	
<b>Take away:</b>		

**What is a Parable?** A parable is a story or analogy used to illustrate a truth. Parables are not allegories where every bit of the story carries some significance. Rather, parables are intended to illustrate *one* truth. The question for each parable then is, What is the point of this parable?

**Why did Jesus use parables?** It is hard for us to accept, but God does not reveal His truth to everyone.<sup>8</sup> To the casual observer, the parables are meaningless fairy tales or moralistic fables. But to those who are His, parables teach the secrets of God. Just as God said through Jeremiah, "*You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart*" (29:13). God won't reveal His secrets to a casual passer-by. Would you?

**How do I figure out what a parable means?** Assuming that parables are each told to illustrate a single truth, there are some tools that help us unearth that truth. We'll use two parables as examples.

1. **What is the context?** To whom and into what situation is Jesus speaking this parable?
  - a. The Sower in Matthew 13:1-9 is told to "great crowds." Lots of people of all kinds. It is applicable, then, to all people.
  - b. The Pharisee and Tax Collector in Luke 18:9-14 is "*told to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt*" (18:9). It is applicable to those who think they are "good" people, or at least people who think they are better than others.
2. **What is the main point of the story?**
  - a. Jesus explains the Sower in Matthew 13:18-23. The common thread among all the soils is the seed, which Jesus explains is the "word of God." What makes the difference between the soils is whether the seed results in harvestable fruit. What makes the difference between people is how they respond to the Word of God. We do well, then to heed Jesus' closing line, "*He who has ears, let him hear*" (13:9). Luke follows this parable with another in which he writes, "*take care, then, how you hear*" (Luke 8:18). We must not only hear the Word, but listen in a certain manner ("*how you hear*").
  - b. Jesus follows the Pharisee and Tax Collector parable with a one-line summary: "*For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted*" (Luke 18:14). Clearly in the parable, Jesus is illustrating the attitude we should have before God, to be aware of our sin, admit our need for mercy and come to Him humbly.
3. **What does the rest of the Bible say about this truth?** If God wrote the entire Bible, He will never contradict Himself, so we can make sure we are on the right track by looking elsewhere in Scripture.
  - a. Responding in action to God's Word is supported throughout the entire Bible, both OT and NT. See James 1:22-25, 1 John 3:18 and Psalm 119:2-3 as examples.
  - b. Humility is also a common theme throughout the Bible, both OT and NT. See Isaiah 57:15 and 1 Peter 5:5-6 as examples.

Now that you know what parables are and what their purpose is, *how* will *you* hear them? What will you do or think differently in response to these two parables and others you read?

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew 13:11, Luke 10:21 and many similar references

Read...	Summarize...	Notes, comments, questions
<b>4. Jesus miracles, part 2 - healing the blind, raising the dead</b>		
<i>Matt 9:27-34</i>		How did Jesus heal these blind men in Matt, Mark and Luke? What does that say about Him?
<i>Mark 8:22-26</i>		
<i>Mark 10:46-52</i>		
<i>Luke 7:11-17</i>		What do these miracles say about Jesus?
<i>Luke 8:40-56</i>		
<i>John 9</i>		
<i>John 11</i>		
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Key Verse:</b>	
<b>Take away:</b>		
<b>5. Jesus' parables (see note on Parables on previous page)</b>		
<i>Luke 8:4-21</i>		What is the point?
<i>Matt 13:24-30</i> <i>Matt 13:36-43</i>		What is the point?
<i>Matt 21:33-46</i>		What is the point?
<i>Matt 13:44-52</i>		What is the point?
<i>Matt 22: 1-14</i>		What is the point?  (See also Isaiah 61:10, Zech 3:4, Rev 19:18)
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Key Verse:</b>	
<b>Take away:</b>		



**What do Jesus' actions tell us about Him?** We get to know people as we watch them and listen to them. In these readings, we watch Jesus. As you read, ask yourself what each of these stories says about Who Jesus is?

Most of these readings are in Matthew for the sake of ease of looking them up. Cross references are noted for your convenience if you want to read other gospel writers' perspectives. These references are often listed in a study Bible's notes as well as online through a resource called The Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge (TSK). Many Bible study websites use TSK for their cross references.

**What did Jesus teach?** Jesus is often said to be a great teacher. What did He teach and how? In this study, you'll read only the two longest of Jesus' "sermons": the Sermon on the Mount and the Upper Room Discourse. Within the Upper Room Discourse is the High Priestly Prayer, the longest recorded prayer by Jesus. I'd encourage you to use your notebook to take more notes than the boxes here will allow on these important passages.

**Were Jesus' ideas new and revolutionary?** Yes and no. In addition to the four basic questions to consider every day, listen for echoes or explanations of the OT in Jesus words. One of the most famous early church fathers, Augustine (354-430) said that **the OT is the NT concealed, and the NT is the OT revealed**. In what ways does Jesus reveal what was concealed in the OT, both affirming OT teaching and taking it to a new level? Keep this question in mind as you read the Sermon on the Mount.

**Point to ponder: What about the aggressive Jesus?** Right after Jesus' first miracle, John describes Jesus going up to the temple in Jerusalem and driving out with a whip the merchants trading in it.<sup>9</sup> What about the second mention of a similar action during His last week?<sup>10</sup> What about Jesus' laments as recorded in the synoptic gospels, "*O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?*"<sup>11</sup>

This doesn't fit with our image of peaceful Jesus cuddling children on His lap. It doesn't fit with the "love everyone" message we so often attribute to Him. Or does it? Are love and anger mutually exclusive? Or is that our *culture* speaking? Do tenderness and fierceness contradict one another? Or is that just what *tolerance* tells us? Think of a mother fighting for her children. Or the doting father who is also a patriot fighting for his country.

What about where God tells Joshua, Job and the Corinthians to "stand up," "get ready," "act like men," "be strong and courageous"?<sup>12</sup> Are there times and places today where a whip of cords would be more appropriate than a group hug? ...where appropriate confrontation might bring about more real love and ultimate good than tolerance ever can? It echoes of Ecclesiastes: there is a time to forgive and overlook an offense, and a time to confront. Is there something that needs confronting in an appropriate, humble but unyielding manner in your life or in your realm of influence?

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<sup>9</sup> John 2:13-22

<sup>10</sup> Matt 21, Mark 11 and Luke 19

<sup>11</sup> Matt 17:17, Mark 9:19, Luke 9:41

<sup>12</sup> Josh 1:9, 7:13, Job 40:7, 1 Corinthians 16:13

Read...	Summarize...	Notes, comments, questions
<b>6. Jesus' actions</b>		What does each story tell you about Jesus?
<i>John 2:13-22</i>		
<i>Matt 8:23-27</i>	Mark 4:35-41, Luk 8:22-25	
<i>Matt 9:35 - 10:15</i>	Mark 3:13-19, Luk 6:12-16	
<b><i>Matt 14:22-33</i></b>	Mark 6:45-52, John 6:16-21	
<b><i>Matt 17:1-9</i></b>	Mark 9:2-8, Luk 9:28-36	
<i>Matt 19:13-15</i>	Mark 10:13-16, Luk 18:15-17	
<i>Matt 21:12-27</i>	Mark 11:15-18, Luk 19:45-47	
<i>Matt 22:15-22</i>	Mark 12:13-27, Luk 20:20-38	
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Key Verse:</b>	
<b>Take away:</b>		
<b>7. Jesus' teaching, Part 1 - Listen for Jesus to reveal what is concealed in the OT</b>		
<i>Matt 5-7 (Matt 5)</i>	Sermon on the Mount  See John 4:24, Isaiah 29:13	What stands out?
<i>Optional Matt 22:37-40</i>	Greatest Commandment	How do the greatest commandments relate to ALL the other commandments?
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Key Verse:</b>	
<b>Take away:</b>		
<b>8. Jesus' teaching, Part 2</b>		
<i>John 14-17 (John 17)</i>	Upper Room Discourse High Priestly Prayer, the longest recorded prayer we have that Jesus made.	What stands out?
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Key Verse:</b>	
<b>Take away:</b>		

**What is a Harmony of the Gospels?** A chronological compilation of all four perspectives of Jesus' life (Matthew's, Mark's, Luke's and John's) is called a **harmony** of the gospels. We'll use a harmony to study Jesus' Passion and resurrection.

**What is the "Passion of Christ"?** The Passion is Jesus suffering, crucifixion and death.

It has been said that the gospels are "Passion narratives with long introductions."<sup>13</sup> As the central event in all of history, it is no surprise that God focused on the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus in the accounts of Jesus' life on Earth. Highlights of His 33 years are described in the first chapters of each gospel. Jesus' final week, beginning with the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, accounts for almost 1/3 of all the gospel writings. Here is where we find the Passion and resurrection in each gospel:

Matthew 26-28 (Triumphal Entry in Matt 21)

Mark 14-16 (Triumphal Entry in Mark 11)

Luke 22-24 (Triumphal Entry in Luke 19)

John 18-20 (Last Supper begins in John 13; Upper Room Discourse is in John 13-16; High Priestly Prayer in John 17)

Additionally, John's gospel transitions from a theme of Jesus' "time has not yet come" found throughout his early chapters to Jesus' statement, "*the hour has come*" in John 12:23 just before the Last Supper. Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection is the single event at the center of all history. It is the focal point of the Big Picture.

What you'll read in the next few days is that to which everything else has been looking forward and at which everything that follows looks back. It is the event that changed everything. Read it well.

**What questions do you have?**

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<sup>13</sup> Dr Don Howell, professor at Columbia International University, Columbia, SC

Read...	Summarize...	Notes, comments, questions
<p>Readings for these sections are from the Harmony of the Passion in <b>Appendix C</b>, a combination of all four gospels with verses about each event gathered together. You are welcome to read all four gospels, but please read at least the left-justified verses. Indented verses are the parallel verses in other gospels. If you prefer, use the references and read the verses in your own Bible.</p>		
<b>9. Jesus' arrest</b>		
<i>Introduction, p.1</i>		
<i>Gethsemane, p.1</i>		
<i>Judas' betrayal, p.2</i>		
<i>High Priest and Sanhedrin, p.3</i>		
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Key Verse:</b>	
<b>Take away:</b>		
<b>10. Jesus' trial</b>		
<i>Peter, p.4</i>		
<i>Judas, p.5</i>		
<i>Pilate, p.5</i>		
<i>Soldiers, p.7</i>		
<i>Via Dolorosa, p.8</i>		
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Key Verse:</b>	
<b>Take away:</b>		

**For further study: To whom did Jesus appear besides the disciples?** Read Acts 9:1-20 and Galatians 1:11-12. What was His purpose in appearing to the person(s) mentioned?

**What questions do you have?**

**Summary:** Review your take-aways from each day during this Section. Are there any themes that stand out? What has God been teaching you or asking you to do or change?

Read...	Summarize...	Notes, comments, questions
<b>11. Jesus' death and burial</b> - This day has a short reading. Pause to consider the immensity of what happens. Today's reading and tomorrow's cover the central event of all history.		
<i>Crucifixion, p.8</i>		
<i>Death, p.9</i>		
<i>Burial, p.10</i>		
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Key Verse:</b>	
<b>Take away:</b>		
<b>12. The empty tomb</b>		How many people encountered the risen Jesus?
<i>Empty tomb, p.11</i>		
<i>Mary, p.12</i>		
<i>Guards' report, p.12</i>		
<b>Road to Emmaus, p.12</b>		
<i>Disciples, p.13</i>		
<i>Thomas, p.13</i>		
<i>Fish, p.13</i>		
<i>Peter, p.14</i>		
<i>Commission, p.14</i>		
<i>Ascension, p.14</i>		
<i>Summary, p.15</i>		
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Key Verse:</b>	
<b>Take away:</b>		

**So what were those covenants again?** Remember the Abrahamic, Davidic, Mosaic and New Covenants? Let's look at them side by side and consider them in light of Jesus.

Covenant	Limited fulfillment	Ultimate fulfillment
<b>Abrahamic:</b>		
Descendents possessing all the <b>land</b> he could see	Kingdoms of David and Solomon	New Earth when all the land will belong to all believers in <b>Jesus</b>
More <b>offspring</b> than can counted	Lots of people of Israel through the years	The "children of Abraham by faith" in <b>Jesus</b> - all believers in all time (Gal 3:7)
All nations will be <b>blessed</b> through him	In a sense, nations were blessed because in Israel there was a knowledge of God	All peoples of all nations are blessed by forgiveness and defeat of sin in <b>Jesus</b> (Gal 3:8)
<b>Davidic:</b>		
<b>House</b> (dynasty) <b>forever</b>	David's lineage continued to Jesus Himself	Through <b>Jesus</b> , God's house / dynasty will continue <b>forever</b> because all believers are His children
<b>Kingdom</b> (people ruled by a king) <b>forever</b>	The Kingdoms of Israel and Judah lasted for a few hundred years	The Kingdom of <b>Jesus</b> which has begun in all who submit to Jesus as their King, and will continue <b>forever</b>
<b>Throne</b> (authority to rule) <b>forever</b>	David's sons sat on the throne of Judah for several hundred years	The authority of <b>Jesus</b> to rule as King was secured when He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death; God exalted Him over all <sup>14</sup> and He will reign <b>forever</b>
<b>Mosaic:</b>		
If people obey, God will bless them	The Israelites of the OT disobeyed and broke the covenant	The NT calls it the "Old Covenant" which is " <i>becoming obsolete and growing old... ready to vanish away</i> " <sup>15</sup>
<b>New:</b>		
See below*.		Hebrews 8:6-13 describes the covenant that <b>Jesus</b> mediates, quoting Jeremiah 31:31-34

\* The New Covenant in its entirety: *"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Philippians 2:8-11

<sup>15</sup> Hebrews 8:13

<sup>16</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-34

Thus all the covenants find their ultimate fulfillment in **Jesus**, beginning when He was on Earth and continuing forever! He fulfills the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants clearly. The Mosaic or "Old" Covenant, of which people failed to keep their end, He did fulfill by His perfect life even as He ushered in the New Covenant in His blood.<sup>17</sup> Jesus, then, is the fulfillment of all the covenantal promises of God.

**For further study: Does the New Covenant apply to just the Israelites, or to NT believers as well?** What do we do with the fact that the New Covenant is made to Israel and Judah? Do we assume it is also for us as believers? If so, why? You might start here: Romans 4:11-12 and 16-17, Romans 9 and Galatians 3:7-9.

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<sup>17</sup> Luke 22:20