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Reading the Bible to Meet Jesus: Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching

Irenaeus of Lyons

Gregory S. MaGee

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SACRED ROOTS SPIRITUAL CLASSICS 13

**READING
THE BIBLE TO
MEET JESUS:**
*Demonstration
of the Apostolic
Preaching*

Irenaeus of Lyons
Edited by
Gregory S. MaGee



BIBLICAL STUDIES

What “They” Say . . . What Will You Say?

Irenaeus's *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* is a wonderfully clear and concise overview of biblical theology. It identifies Christ as the unifying thread that knits the sixty-six books of Scripture into a single volume. Greg MaGee effectively guides readers through this work with thoughtfully written commentary and questions, both of which are well suited for group discussion as well as personal reflection. Pastors will find MaGee's concluding "Soul Work and Soul Care" appendix full of valuable suggestions for putting this book to work across the breadth of church ministry.

~ Randall J. Gruendyke, DMin,

Pastor of Ministry Leadership,
Grace Evangelical Free Church, La Mirada, CA

Irenaeus's *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, even though written in a different age and for a different audience, speaks clearly and authoritatively to all followers of Jesus Christ in every corner of the world. He invites us to approach Scripture as seekers, desiring to meet Jesus and be blessed by him. In an age where many churches embrace erroneous teachings and many Christians lead lives that are more in line with the pagan world, Irenaeus calls us back to a right orthodoxy and right orthopraxy. The introductory notes and study questions help guide the reader into a deeper understanding of the text. I highly recommend this book for individual study and as catechism material in the local church.

~ Moses Kintu, PhD,

Missionary, Campus Crusade for Christ, Malawi
Adjunct Lecturer, New Testament Department,
International Leadership University, Kenya

SACRED ROOTS SPIRITUAL CLASSICS



"Toward Ten Thousand Tozers"

*Reading the Bible to Meet Jesus:
Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*

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Gregory S. MaGee

Reading the Bible to Meet Jesus: Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching

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Scripture quotations in Irenaeus's text are the editor's translation.

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Series Preface

Christian spiritual classics are non-canonical texts testified to across centuries and cultures as helpful for soul work and soul care. While spiritual classics are not on the same level as Scripture, they are *deep* and *wide* texts written by master practitioners in the way of Jesus. These texts have stood the test of time (*deep*), having been read by Christian leaders for many decades or even centuries. These classics have also been read with profit across many cultures (*wide*). When apprenticing themselves to these wise authors, Christian leaders across many generations and diverse cultures have found themselves helped with nurturing their own souls and caring for the souls of others.

Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics equip urban, rural, and incarcerated congregational leaders with the wealth of the Christian tradition. In partnership with The Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI), each Sacred Roots Spiritual Classic is divided into eight chapters to correspond to TUMI's Capstone Curriculum modules (www.tumi.org). Additionally, each Sacred Roots Spiritual Classic is assigned a specific subject

area within TUMI's Capstone Curriculum: Biblical Studies (red cover), Theology and Ethics (blue cover), Christian Ministry (orange cover), or Global Mission (purple cover). For a more detailed description, see the appendix "A Letter to God's Friends and Fellow Warriors on Why We Read the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics Together."

Every Sacred Roots Spiritual Classic is edited by a scholar who has engaged it both academically and devotionally. The editor provides an introduction as well as chapter summaries. Each chapter consists of the actual text of the spiritual classic written by its author, not the editor, and concludes with five discussion questions to help you discuss the text with spiritual friends. Following chapters 1–8 is a summary afterword from the editor. Every classic also includes a "Continuing the Conversation" appendix with suggested resources, including other books written by the author, biographies, and more.

In chapters 1–8, the editor has either updated the old English to more contemporary English or provided a new translation. Additionally, the editor has added footnotes to define difficult or key vocabulary. The editor has also updated direct Scripture quotations to (usually) the English Standard Version, added Scripture references, and added italicized Scripture references to paraphrases of Scripture.

Before reading a Sacred Roots Spiritual Classic, we recommend you read both the classic's introduction and its "Soul Work and Soul Care" appendix. The latter offers practical suggestions for how to begin applying lessons from the spiritual classic into your life and ministry. Because many of the practices introduced in the spiritual classics may be new to readers, it can help to first understand some

of the potential payoffs for investing in reading the spiritual classic before you begin.

Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics are available as paperbacks, hardbacks, e-books, and audiobooks. Additional resources for study and group discussion for each classic are available at www.sacredrootsministry.org.



BIBLICAL STUDIES

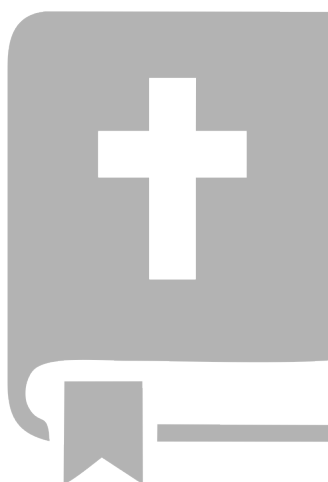


Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Hank Voss for his vision to support churches and ministries through the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics and for inviting me to participate in that good work with this volume. I am also grateful for Isaiah Swain, May Young, Greg Peters, Ryan Carter, and the rest of the Sacred Roots team for their help and support on this book.

My wife Emily generously invested time to proofread this book and offered valuable feedback about the readability of the main text and supporting materials. Taylor University students Gabe Bruner and Sarah Kelley studied an early draft of the main text, and they caught errors and suggested helpful changes to the wording.

Finally, I am thankful for Irenaeus of Lyons, a faithful servant of Christ, for showing believers of his generation and ours the joys of reading the Bible to meet Jesus.



BIBLICAL STUDIES



Introduction

You are about to read a short book written over eighteen hundred years ago by a follower of Jesus Christ and key leader in the early church. This book has given me great spiritual refreshment, and I trust that God will use it to stir your heart and deepen your faith as well.

Have you ever felt the need for deeper spiritual resources and a grander vision of the Christian faith for a new leg of your journey in life? I felt this way in my early thirties, after having been a follower of Christ for twenty years. To address this need in my life, God began to reinvigorate my worship of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and my understanding of the Bible as a sweeping and unified story across the Old and New Testaments, with Jesus at the center. My wife Emily and I had recently moved to a new city with our family. We had been serving in ministry over the past ten years and had been stretched in many good ways during that season. But we were also hungry to develop deeper roots in our faith and a renewed motivation for Christian life and worship. Our ultimate goal was to

grow in our knowledge, love, and enjoyment of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God first began to meet this hunger by refreshing my vision of Christian life and worship. He led our family to a church, Trinity Fellowship in Richardson, Texas, that took its Trinitarian heritage seriously.¹ The congregation's adoration of God the Father, Son, and Spirit worked its way into all aspects of church life: from the mission statement, to the corporate worship, to the teaching, and even to the architecture. This Trinitarian focus was sharpened by both the Bible and the works of prominent theologians from the history of the church. I already had a solid understanding of Trinitarian doctrine from the Bible and appreciated the importance of "God in three persons, blessed Trinity," but I still had many questions and interests to explore. Our participation in this church helped me further interact with Trinitarian Christianity in constructive and transformative ways that increased my enthusiasm about knowing and loving God.

The second gift God gave to me was opening my eyes to the possibilities of joyfully reading, studying, and meditating on the Scriptures for the remaining years of my life. He showed me that the Bible, which was already quite familiar to me, contained many richer layers than I had yet

1 Christians in the early centuries knew that the way they viewed God was the most important thing about them. Their vision of God shaped their worship, beliefs, affections, practices, and relationships. In particular, these followers of Christ sought to discern how God is one God (Deut 6:4–6) while affirming that the Father is God, Jesus is God, and the Holy Spirit is God (Matt 28:19; John 14:9–27; 2 Cor 13:14). Early Christians began using the word "Trinity" to capture the idea that there is one true God who exists eternally in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They never reduced God to a formula, but they let their recognition of the unity and deity of Father, Son, and Spirit capture their imagination and fuel their wonder, worship, and service.

unearthed. I became acquainted with the field of biblical theology, which examines the weaving interconnections of biblical passages and themes that knit together into one magnificent story that leads to Christ's incarnational² ministry. Biblical theology examines individual passages as part of an overarching account of God's powerful and gracious involvement with the world he created. This story and its major themes, with Jesus at the center, recharged the way I read Scripture, awakening me to the purposeful and surprising ways God weaves together the various strands of history into a coherent overall narrative.

Irenaeus became a kindred spirit for me in my new journey of exploration. He pondered our Triune God in his writings and wrestled with how the Scriptures tell a compelling story of God's work culminating in the ministry of Jesus Christ. I studied his first book, *Against Heresies*, and found much substantive biblical and theological truth to contemplate. But when I discovered his *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, I really enjoyed its concise yet rewarding display of the beautiful works of Father, Son, and Spirit in human history. These great acts were previewed throughout the Bible's revelation of God's epic plans, which reach a crescendo in Christ's first and second advents.³ Irenaeus became both an inspiration and a wise

2 Incarnation – A word describing God the Son taking on complete, genuine, physical humanity to live among us (John 1:14) and bring us salvation. Though the Son has existed eternally as God, he humbled himself by becoming human and dying on the cross for us (Phil 2:6–8). Jesus's incarnational ministry is recorded in the four Gospels.

3 Advent – A term which means "coming" and describes the eternal Son of God coming into our world. The first advent refers to Jesus's earthly life and ministry in the first century, and the second advent refers to Jesus's future glorious return to reclaim and restore all of creation.

tutor in my spiritual formation and growing devotion to the Lord.

The Journey Ahead

The book in your hands opens a fascinating window into the theology of the early Christian leader named Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyons.⁴ Irenaeus lived in a much different world than ours. The church at that time was a growing movement that had “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6) as the good news of Jesus Christ made inroads into different people groups in the Roman Empire and beyond. But the church was still a small fish in a big pond, and the early Christians faced much misunderstanding, opposition, and persecution from those outside the Christian movement. They also saw threats to the health of the church from the inside, in the form of appealing but erroneous teachings about Christ and authentic spirituality.

While Irenaeus ministered in Lyons,⁵ dozens of Christians were put to death as part of a sudden and extreme persecution in Lyons* and nearby Vienne.⁶ In the wake of this persecution and in the face of many false teachings that were disrupting Christian churches, Irenaeus began writing about and defending a faith worth dying for. In his second book, Irenaeus took up the challenge of showing fellow believers how to meet Jesus throughout the Old

4 Most of the biographical information we have about Irenaeus comes from Eusebius, whose book *Church History* was published in the early fourth century.

5 Lyons – A city in modern-day France.

6 Eusebius recounts a letter that describes the martyrs' plight in great detail (*Church History* 5.1–3). Irenaeus became a bishop during or shortly after the persecutions. It is unknown why some Christians were targeted and others were not, but those who had witnessed the persecutions vouched for Irenaeus and his ministry (*Church History* 5.4).

Testament Scriptures. He wanted other followers of Christ, regardless of the intensity of pressures outside and inside the church, to more deeply embrace the defining story of their lives and of the world.

History and Focus of the Text

Though Irenaeus's book was written in the late second century AD, and theologians and historians have known of its existence for a long time,⁷ it was lost to history for many centuries until a copy of it was found in 1904 in Yerevan, Armenia. The copy was in the Armenian language, a translation of the original Greek. The book was entitled *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* and was much shorter than Irenaeus's more famous composition *Against Heresies*.⁸ Unlike *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus's *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* bypasses detailed discussions of second century false teachings and jumps right into a dynamic explanation of orthodox Christian teaching. This teaching has a special focus on the ways the Spirit, through the Old Testament prophets, pointed to Jesus's ministry of carrying out God's majestic plans of salvation and restoration for the world.

Text and Translation Process

This refreshed English version of *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* aims to make Irenaeus's work more accessible to readers, in keeping with the spirit of the Sacred Roots project. This version is a paraphrase that

7 The earliest surviving reference to this book is found in Eusebius's *Church History* (5.26).

8 Irenaeus mentions *Against Heresies* in section 99 of this book. Irenaeus's own title for *Against Heresies* is *Refutation and Overthrowal of Falsely-Called Knowledge*, a title that gives a nod to Paul's wording from 1 Timothy 6:20.

attempts to faithfully preserve the meaning of the original work while not being limited by strict word order and sentence structure or the exact reproduction of technical theological phrases. Since the Armenian version itself was a translation of the original Greek work, my goal for this version was to determine the best way to communicate an underlying Greek text that is no longer in our possession. I started with a 1920 English translation and translation notes from J. A. Robinson, but I also consulted translations and notes from J. P. Smith (English, 1952), A. Rousseau (French and Latin, 1995), and J. Behr (English, 1997) to consider better possibilities for how to convey the meaning of each section. These scholars all worked with the surviving Armenian copy but made educated guesses about the underlying Greek in Irenaeus's original writing.

The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching. Translated by J. A. Robinson. London: SPCK, 1920.

St. Irenaeus: Proof of the Apostolic Preaching. Translated by J. P. Smith. Ancient Christian Writers 16. New York: Paulist Press, 1952.

Irénée de Lyon: Demonstration de la Prédication Apostolique. Translated by A. Rousseau. Sources chrétiennes 406. Paris: Cerf, 1995.

On the Apostolic Preaching: St. Irenaeus of Lyons. Translated by John Behr. Popular Patristics Series 17. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997.

Other articles, essays, and books, including a passage-by-passage theological commentary, shed additional light on the more subtle features of Irenaeus's theological

arguments.⁹ I also referred regularly to the Greek Septuagint¹⁰ and three English translations of the Septuagint,* since Irenaeus made such heavy use of this version of the Old Testament in his book.¹¹ Finally, Irenaeus's other book *Against Heresies* was a valuable resource for both further understanding Irenaeus's thinking as well as discerning the English terms and phrases that accurately expressed his meaning. The book in your hands should not be used as a substitute for the more scholarly editions mentioned above that work directly with the sole ancient copy's Armenian language. Still, I hope you will find this version to be an engaging gateway into Irenaeus's captivating ideas and his love for meeting Jesus in Scripture!

Irenaeus usually follows the wording of the Greek Septuagint* (LXX) when he quotes the Old Testament. For the reader's convenience, when an Old Testament chapter and verse reference is numbered differently in the English and Septuagint* translations, both references are included. When a single reference is shown, that means that the numbering is the same in both the English and Septuagint,* but the language still corresponds to wording

9 Iain M. Mackenzie, *Irenaeus's Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching: A Theological Commentary and Translation*, Routledge Revivals (London: Routledge, 2018).

10 Septuagint – A Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was originally written almost entirely in Hebrew. The Septuagint was often quoted by New Testament authors and other early Christians, such as Irenaeus.

11 Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart, eds., *Septuaginta* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006); *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament and Apocrypha: With an English Translation*, trans. Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1851); Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Ken M. Penner, Rick Brannan, and Israel Loken, eds., *The Lexham English Septuagint*, 2nd ed. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019).

from the Septuagint.* Old Testament passages quoted by Irenaeus are my translation of the LXX wording.

Irenaeus's View of Scripture

In his own words in *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus reveals how he understands the Bible that he so often refers to in *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*. The early Christians believed God spoke authoritatively and truthfully through the Spirit-inspired words of the prophets and apostles.¹² Though the New Testament we read today had not yet been formally recognized as a fixed collection of twenty-seven books, the writings themselves were circulating and carried the same authority as Old Testament Scripture.¹³

In *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus offers us two memorable analogies about the value and healthy use of the Bible. First, he describes meeting Jesus in the Old Testament as finding a treasure in a field (*Against Heresies* 4.26.1). Before Jesus's incarnation there were many signposts pointing to his ministry, but they were sometimes subtle and difficult to recognize. But now that Jesus has come to our world we can see these signposts as treasures that have been unearthed, since the fulfillment of the Old

12 The category of "prophets" not only includes the actual writing prophets of the Old Testament, but also figures such as Moses and David who spoke prophetically by the Spirit. In the end, the whole scope of Old Testament Scriptures is considered the testimony of the prophets. Likewise, the apostles included apostles directly called by Christ (e.g., Peter, Matthew, John, Paul) as well as others in apostolic circles who had written inspired and authoritative truth about Christ (e.g., Mark, Luke, James, Jude, the author of Hebrews).

13 This is seen even in the New Testament itself when the apostle Peter associates Paul's letters with "the other Scriptures" (2 Pet 3:16). In Irenaeus's extensive use of Scripture in *Against Heresies* and *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, he refers to nearly all of today's New Testament books as authoritative revelation from God.

Testament types and prophecies are now made clear in Christ. Second, Irenaeus talks about false teachers' distortions of the Bible using the analogy of a stunning mosaic of a king that adorns the floor of a house (*Against Heresies* 1.8.1, 1.9.4). Imagine that troublemakers sneak into the home at night and rearrange the mosaic tiles to create a picture of a fox or dog instead of the king. The owner wakes up the next day and immediately recognizes the difference, even though the same tiles are all still accounted for. These troublemakers are the false teachers of Irenaeus's day. The tiles they use are recognizable from the Bible, but they are rearranged and connected in ways that distort the overall picture, which is meant to display Christ the King. Followers of Christ study the Scriptures with a vivid picture of Christ the King in their minds and hearts. Faithful Christian reading of Scripture respects the Trinitarian, Christ-centered shape of the Christian story. Each mosaic piece fits into a larger picture, and the parts and the whole must both be respected.

Irenaeus approached Scripture similarly to the way Jesus and the apostles did. When Jesus walked with two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, he also walked them through the many Old Testament passages that foreshadowed and explained his ministry (Luke 24:25–27). Elsewhere, Jesus affirmed that a complete and correct reading of the Old Testament Scriptures must recognize that the Scriptures testified about him (John 5:39). The apostle Peter explains that the Old Testament prophets prophesied by the Spirit with an interest in the ultimate fulfillment of their prophecies in the ministry of the Messiah (1 Pet 1:10–11). The apostle Paul celebrates the Old Testament as “the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ

Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15). He also proclaims that no matter how many promises God has made, they are all “Yes” in Christ (2 Cor 1:20). Jesus and the apostles are pioneers in reading the Old Testament to meet Jesus. Irenaeus is simply one devoted believer who follows in their steps. There are instances where Irenaeus sees some Old Testament signposts to Jesus that may not be as convincing to us today, but there are also many other Old Testament passages mentioned in the New Testament Irenaeus does not address in this book. The legacy Irenaeus continues from which we can learn is the expectation that the Spirit speaks harmoniously through the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles, revealing the Word, Christ Jesus (1 Pet 1:10–12).

The Rule of Faith

Irenaeus also relied upon an important resource known as “the rule of faith” (*regula fide**) to guide his discovery of Jesus in the passages of the Old Testament. The rule of faith* was a profession of convictions about the most central matters of Christian faith, truths related to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.¹⁴ These convictions had been proclaimed in Christian worship and celebrated in Christian teaching from the beginning of the church’s existence, so they were deeply imprinted into the thoughts and affections of the early followers of Christ. Irenaeus and other early Christian leaders articulated the rule of faith* in various ways, but they shared a common focus on the essence and works of the Trinity. The rule of faith* took its cues from New Testament passages—such as 1 Corinthians 15:3–4, Colossians 1:15–20, 1 Timothy

14 Baptismal candidates in the early church were often taught the rule of faith* and then professed their belief in these truths when they were baptized.

3:16, and Hebrews 9:27–28—that championed core truths about the ministry of Christ. The rule of faith* was a forerunner to the later creeds, such as the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed, which added standard wording to give a unified voice to the common convictions of the faith.

The rule of faith* functioned as both a magnet and fence for Irenaeus’s quest to see Jesus in Scripture. First, the preeminence of the Father, Son, and Spirit and the basic story of God’s saving acts throughout history exerted a magnetic pull on Irenaeus’s interpretation of Scripture. This magnetic effect guaranteed that the most important truths remained most prominent in Irenaeus’s writings. He devoted his time and efforts to keeping first things first—knowing and adoring God the Father, Son, and Spirit. Second, the rule of faith* served as a fence. It delineated what biblical and theological conclusions were considered flawed and “out of bounds” for Christian thinkers. Irenaeus was able to explore much profound and creative ground inside the fence. The false teachers of Irenaeus’s day, such as the Gnostics¹⁵ and Marcionites,¹⁶ too often tore down the fence by neglecting the rule of faith* and stumbled into spiritual ruin as a result. The fencing function of the rule of faith* helped ensure that Irenaeus’s deepened

15 Gnostics – A religious group whose adherents in the second century sometimes tried to merge their non-Christian ideas with the teachings of Christianity.

16 Marcionites – Followers of the teachings of Marcion, who grew up within the Christian tradition but whose ideas ultimately strayed from the teachings of the Bible. Both Marcionites and Gnostics* denied Jesus’s full humanity and drove a wedge between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. Both groups tried to appeal to specific biblical passages or concepts to support their ideas without properly understanding the passages within the complete biblical account of God’s saving work throughout history.

comprehension of divine truths kept in step with the church's tried and true theological heritage.

Irenaeus's Doctrine of Recapitulation

An essential part of the rule of faith* as Irenaeus explained it is the concept of recapitulation.* Recapitulation* consists of a fully human Christ repeating and rewriting human history in order to restore humanity to God. The term identifies both the end goal of God's saving plans and the process by which he carried out these plans in Christ. The idea of recapitulation* has its origins in Ephesians 1:9–10, which describes God's plan to unite and restore (recapitulate) everything in heaven and earth in Christ as the crowning achievement of his eternal plans for this world.

Irenaeus's view of recapitulation* builds upon Paul's. Irenaeus identifies recapitulation* as God's purposeful, perfect, and progressive actions to redeem fallen humanity and give believers in Christ eternal life and communion with God. God uses the process of Jesus rewriting the story of human experience to attain this final goal. In his incarnational ministry, Jesus carries out a project of reclamation and makeover for human experience and destiny. Jesus is the eternal Word of God who becomes human (John 1:14), takes on full humanity as the second Adam (Rom 5:12–21), and rewrites major moments of Israel's history in his own experience. Jesus reverses the rebellion and brokenness of sinful humanity by suffering and dying for humanity and then conquering death through his resurrection. In doing so he realigns human existence with God's original design and God's ultimate plans to bring humanity back

into abundant life and everlasting communion with Father, Son, and Spirit (Heb 2:5–18).

In this version of *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, many technical terms have been translated into more familiar English. But since recapitulation* is such an important and multilayered concept for Irenaeus, this book retains the term so that readers can appreciate its frequency and its weight in the argument of the book.

Structure of the Book

This version of Irenaeus's book is divided into eight chapters covering one hundred sections. The sections follow the traditional division of the material. The eight chapters share the repeated idea of prophetic fulfillment in Christ, which is the way Irenaeus "demonstrates" the apostolic preaching that he embraces. There is a general movement across the chapters from God the Father, to God the Son, to God the Spirit, though Irenaeus avoids viewing the work of Father, Son, and Spirit in isolation from an overall Trinitarian perspective.¹⁷ God the Father created the world and moved in the lives of Old Testament people, but he created the world by his Word, and the Word was present and active over the course of human history. The Spirit spoke through the prophets to preview the incarnational ministry of the Word made flesh, Jesus. As you read the book, watch for this basic structural progression as well as Irenaeus's pervasive and eloquent descriptions of the Trinitarian story recounted throughout Scripture.

17 James B. Wiegel, "The Trinitarian Structure of Irenaeus's *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*," *Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (2014): 113–39.



Preparing to Read This Book

We are about to embark on a rewarding journey through Irenaeus's book! Prepare your mind to look for how major ideas are developed and repeated. You might underline or highlight important wording or make marginal notes as you go. Consult the cross references from Scripture that are provided along the way. These are verse references that I have included as an addition to Irenaeus's original book. I also encourage you to open your heart to both the truth and beauty of Irenaeus's reflections. Irenaeus wrote from a position of genuine devotion to Christ, and now we can catch his contagious affection for Christ and allow it to settle and simmer in our hearts. Allow Irenaeus's ideas to foster an authentic encounter with the God he describes. Finally, be ready to respond in prayer, worship, and even the development of new habits in your personal reading of Scripture or your participation in corporate worship and ministry. The questions at the end of each chapter will help prod you in these areas of *head, heart, hands*, and *habits*. A preliminary question about *habitat* will also help you explore either the ancient setting in which Irenaeus wrote or the contemporary setting in which we live. These questions should stimulate a more lively, personal reading of the material and constructive discussion with others about Irenaeus's ideas.

I invite you to make this prayer your own as we begin these readings: *Dear heavenly Father, open our eyes and hearts to receive or recapture a vision for the beauty of your character; the wonder of your eternal being, and the power and mercy of your works of creation and redemption through Christ and by the Holy Spirit. May we have vibrant fellowship with Jesus through this walk through the Old Testament and appreciate*

the intentional ways you spoke through the prophets to point to Christ. Please help us also experience guidance and illumination by your same Holy Spirit when we read Scripture today. May you promote good understanding, fruitful discussions, and responses of faith, worship, and obedience as we ponder your wonderful works alongside our brother in Christ, Irenaeus. In Jesus's name we pray, Amen.



What do you think is significant about this book being written so early in Christian history, at a time when Christians faced so much persecution and so many threats of false teaching?



Irenaeus quotes or alludes to John 1:14 more than any other passage of Scripture in this book. Read this verse in its surrounding context (John 1:1–18). Why do you think that “the Word became flesh” is so significant, and what is the connection to Irenaeus’s doctrine of recapitulation?*



How has God used Scripture or theology to refresh your faith in the past? In what ways would you like to see your love for God strengthened or renewed in your life right now?



Which biblical truths are worth dying for, and why do you think so?



The rule of faith* that Irenaeus often endorsed was a precursor to the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed. What is your experience with reciting creeds as part of a worship service? What do you think would help you and other followers of Christ get the most out of this practice?



BIBLICAL STUDIES

The Text





BIBLICAL STUDIES



Chapter 1

A Strengthened Faith Shaped by God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

In this first chapter, Irenaeus greets his friend Marcianus and expresses his hope that Marcianus will be able to use his book to grow spiritually and instruct others in their faith formation. Irenaeus then introduces his short book and summarizes the saving works of the Father, Son, and Spirit throughout history. Irenaeus emphasizes that the healthy Christian life consists of both obedient living and correct doctrine. The primary focus of his book will be to highlight correct doctrine by connecting the ministry of Jesus to the Old Testament. Jesus's fulfillment of the Old Testament promises can be understood only in a Trinitarian framework, so Irenaeus describes what Christians believe about God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As you read this chapter, be on the lookout for Irenaeus's stunning descriptions of God's ultimate goals for humanity. God's grand plans, through Christ and by the Spirit, consist of "uniting humans to God" (§1), "bringing people into God's presence" (§2), giving "new birth into union with God" (§3), allowing for "communion

between God and humanity” (§6), and giving “the gift of immortality” (§7). These wonderful plans are all part of God’s determination to “recapitulate all things” (§6) in Christ as prophesied through the Spirit.

1. My dear Marcianus,¹ knowing your passion for godliness, which alone leads us to eternal life, I rejoice with you and pray that you may keep your faith intact and thus please God your Maker. I wish it were possible that we could always be together, to help each other and ease the burdens of this life by our frequent discussions of profitable topics. But since for now we are separated from each other physically, we are striving instead to communicate with you briefly by writing, to demonstrate in a succinct way the preaching of the truth so that your faith may be strengthened. We are sending you a sort of “summary commentary” so that you may gain a lot from a little, as you contemplate all the essential parts of the body of Christian truth within this short document and receive this brief demonstration of the truths of God. This will be fruitful for your own salvation, and you will also be able to confound all those who embrace false views and will be able to present our sound and pure teaching to everyone who wants to gain knowledge.

For there is a single ascending path for all who see, a path lit by heavenly light. But there are many dark and diverging paths for those who do not see. The

1 Marcianus may be the unnamed friend that Irenaeus addresses at several places in *Against Heresies* as well. Near the end of *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* (Chapter 20), a different author also refers to a follower of Christ named Marcianus (Marcus).

first of these paths leads to the kingdom of heaven, uniting humans to God, but those other paths lead down to death, separating humans from God. Therefore, it is necessary for you as well as for all who care about their own salvation to move forward by faith, resolutely staying on the right path, rather than easing up and becoming bogged down in worldly desires or veering off path and wandering from what is right.

2. Since humans are living beings who consist of soul and body, their journey through life must involve both soul and body. And the fact that both soul and body are susceptible to stumbling supports the following two related concepts. First, we can speak of the purity of the body, in terms of abstinence from all shameful things and sinful actions. Second, we can speak of the purity of the soul, in terms of preserving doctrinal integrity by neither adding to nor taking away anything from the faith that is placed in God. For godliness is tainted by the moral pollution of the body, and it is impaired and loses its integrity when falsehood enters the soul. But godliness maintains its beauty and high quality when truth remains constantly in the soul, and purity remains in the body. For what good is it to know the truth in words while still polluting the body and engaging in evil behavior? Or how can purity of the body be beneficial if there is no truth in the soul? For these two rejoice when they are united, and they work together to bring people into God's presence.

With this in view the Holy Spirit says through David, "Blessed is the one who has not walked in the counsel

of the ungodly” (Ps 1:1a),² that is, the counsel of the nations that do not know God, for the ungodly are those who do not worship the One Who Is, the true God. And so the Word says to Moses, “I am He who is” (Exod 3:14).³ So those who do not worship “the God who is” are the ungodly. “And blessed is the one who has not stood in the pathway of sinners” (Ps 1:1b), for sinners are those who have the knowledge of God but do not keep his commandments—they are the dismissive despisers. “And blessed is the one who has not sat in the seat of the troublemakers” (Ps 1:1c), for the troublemakers are those who corrupt not only themselves but also others through evil and distorted doctrine, since the seat is a symbol of a school of teaching. This is what the heretics are—they sit in the seat of the troublemakers, and those who receive the poison of their doctrine are corrupted.

We must hold firmly to the rule of faith, without wavering, and put the commandments of God into practice, believing in God and fearing him as Lord, and loving him as Father.

3. Therefore, to avoid any such harmful outcome, we must hold firmly to the rule of faith,* without wavering, and put the commandments of God into practice, believing in God and fearing him as Lord, and loving him as Father. This putting into practice, then, comes about by faith, for Isaiah says, “If you do not believe,

2 Author’s translation of the Septuagint* (as recounted by Irenaeus) here and throughout.

3 Irenaeus is referring to Jesus, the eternal Son of God, when he mentions “the Word” speaking to Moses.

neither will you understand” (Isa 7:9).⁴ And faith is formed by the truth, because faith is founded on actual reality, so that we believe in what really is, as it is, and since we believe in what really is, as it is, we can always remain confident in it. Since, then, faith is essential for our salvation, we must take great care of that faith, so that we may have a true comprehension of reality.

So, here is what the Christian faith, as handed down to us from the elders, the disciples of the apostles, does for us. First, it invites us to remember that we have received baptism for the forgiveness of sins, in the name of God the Father, and in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was incarnate and died and rose again, and in the Holy Spirit of God (Matt 28:19). It teaches us that this baptism is the seal of eternal life, and is the new birth into union with God, so that we are no longer the children of mortal humans but the children of the eternal God. It teaches us that the everlasting God is above everything that exists, and that all things are under his authority, and that all the things that are under him were made by him. For God is not the ruler and Lord over things that belong to someone else, but over things that belong to him. And since all things are God’s, God is the Almighty, and all things come from God.

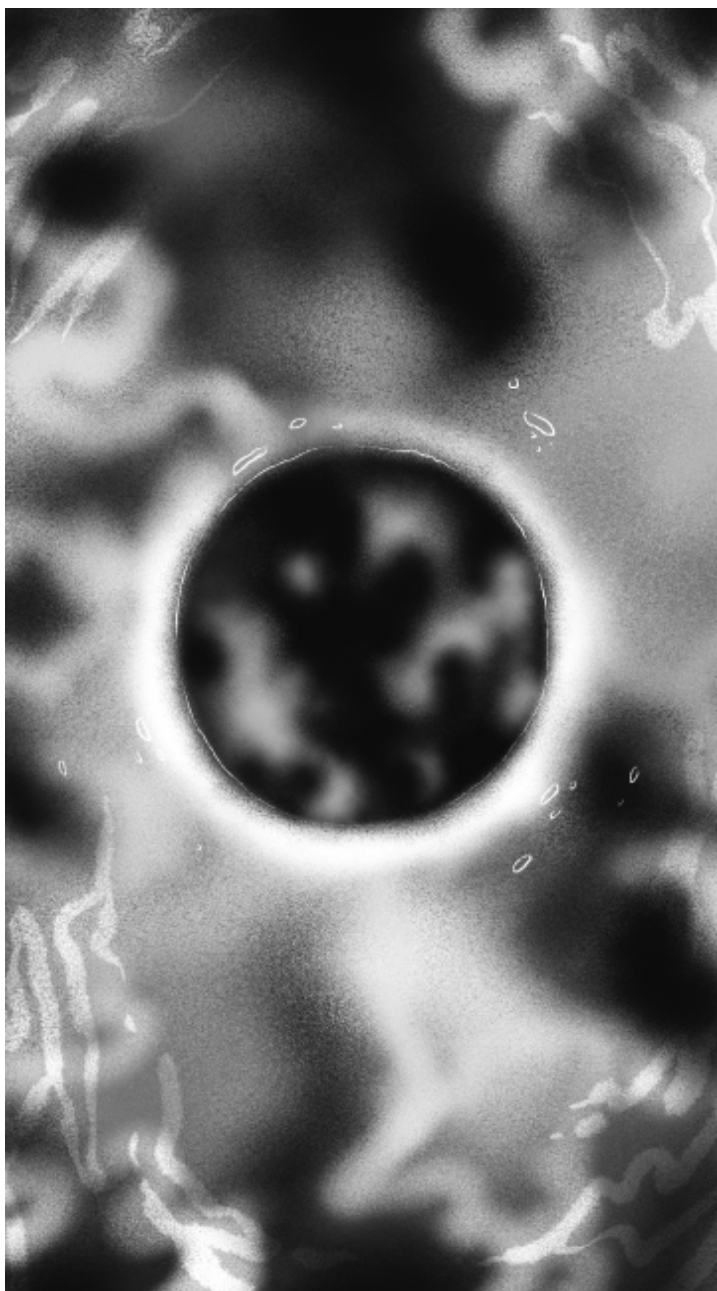
4. Things that exist must originate from some great cause. And the origin of all things is God, for he himself was not made by anyone, and by him all things were made. And that is why, first of all, we must believe that there is one God, the Father, who created and formed all things,

4 The “understanding” in this context suggests an understanding that leads to obedience.

and brought what did not exist into existence, and who, while containing all things, is the only one who cannot be contained. Now “all things” includes this world of ours, and humans in it. Therefore, this world was also created by God.

5. So then, it is demonstrated that there is one God, the Father, not made, invisible, Creator of all things, above whom there is no other God, and after whom there is no other God. And since God is verbal (*logikos*), then by the Word (*Logos*) he created the things that were made (John 1:3).⁵ And since God is Spirit, by the Spirit he adorned all things, as also the prophet says: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were established, and all the spiritual powers in them by his Spirit (Ps 33:6 [32:6 LXX]). Since the Word establishes, or forms and brings into existence, and the Spirit orders and shapes the diversity of the spiritual powers, it is fitting that the Son is called the Word, and the Spirit is called the Wisdom of God. Paul the apostle thus rightly says, “One God, the Father, who is over all and through all and in us all” (Eph 4:6). Indeed, over all is the Father, and through all is the Son, for through him all things were made by the Father, and in us all is the Spirit, who cries out, “Abba, Father” (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15), and forms humanity into the likeness of God. Thus, the Spirit displays the Word, and for this reason the prophets announced the Son of God; and the Word utters the Spirit, and therefore is himself

5 The wordplay here is more striking in the Greek, since *logikos* and *Logos* share the same root. Though *logikos* can also mean something such as “reasonable” or “logical,” the link in this translation between “verbal” and “Word” is fitting (see Behr, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, 43), since it recalls the repeated wording of “God said” in the creation account of Genesis 1.



the interpreter of the prophets (Luke 24:27), and he brings humanity up to the Father.

This then is the proper order of our faith, and the foundation of the building, and the support structure of our conduct.

6. This then is the proper order of our faith, and the foundation of the building, and the support structure of our conduct: God, the Father, not made, not contained, invisible, one God, the Creator of all things: this is the first article of our faith. The second article is this: the Word of God, Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord, who was revealed to the prophets according to the distinctive manner of their prophesying and according to the workings of the grand plan⁶ of the Father. Through him all things were made, and in the end of times,⁷ in order to recapitulate all things, he also became a man among men, visible and tangible, in order to abolish death and bring life to light (2 Tim 1:10) and attain communion between God and humanity. And the third article is this: the Holy Spirit, through whom the prophets prophesied, the patriarchs learned the things of God, and the righteous were guided in the way of righteousness. And the Spirit was the One who in the end of times* was poured out in

6 The word translated “grand plan” is from the Greek *oikonomia*, a biblical term that is somewhat difficult to translate into English. Irenaeus uses this word frequently, and it is interpreted throughout this translation in a way that is most fitting to the context. In other places in this book, it is translated as “distinct plan” or “distinct arrangement.”

7 End Times – The final, decisive era of salvation history, beginning with Christ’s incarnational ministry as the fulfillment of God’s plans.

a new way on the human race (Joel 2:28–32; Acts 2),
renewing people throughout the earth to God.

7. That is why the baptism of our regeneration takes place through these three articles, granting us new birth for union with God the Father through his Son by the Holy Spirit. For all who carry in them the Spirit of God are led to the Word, that is, to the Son; and the Son brings them to the Father, and the Father gives the gift of immortality. And so without the Spirit it is not possible to behold the Word of God, nor without the Son can any draw near to the Father, since the Son is the knowledge of the Father, and the knowledge of the Son of God is through the Holy Spirit. And, according to the good pleasure of the Father, the Son dispenses the Spirit to whomever the Father wills and as he wills.

Discussion Questions



Irenaeus states that he wants Marcianus to “contemplate all the essential parts of the body of Christian truth” (§1). Do people in your church or ministry circles enjoy contemplating and discussing theology? Why do you think they do or do not?



Evaluate Irenaeus’s selection of central doctrines included in the rule of faith* in §6 (further explained in §§3–7). How does this compare with what you consider most important in the Christian faith? What doctrine from Irenaeus’s summary could strengthen your understanding of the Christian faith?



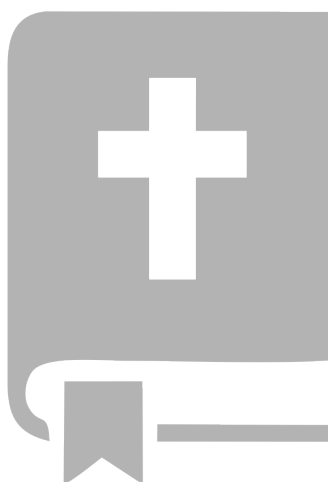
Irenaeus talks about how a Christian’s beliefs and practices (soul and body) should be united, and that our practices should reflect our beliefs (§2). What is the spiritual state of your beliefs and practices right now? How closely are the two in harmony with each other and how much do they support a greater intimacy with God in your life?



Since this book is all about reading the Bible to meet Jesus, the description in §7 of the Spirit’s role in helping us do this is highly relevant. What would it look like to depend more on the Spirit in the process of learning to see Jesus more clearly in all the Bible? What action steps would this require?



Irenaeus draws from Psalm 1 to discuss three harmful influences to avoid: people with distorted worship, those with disobedient lifestyles, and those with erroneous doctrine. As you evaluate the influences in your life, which area of influence (flawed worship, practice, or doctrine) do you need to be more discerning about? What steps will you take to guard against unhealthy influences in this area?



BIBLICAL STUDIES



Chapter 2

God's Creation and Human Rebellion

This chapter describes God the Father, the spiritual world, the creation of the world, and the creation and fall of humanity. Irenaeus groups these topics under the “first article” of the rule of faith that he mentioned in Chapter 1, since they pertain primarily to the nature and works of God the Father. These paragraphs describe God as eternal, invisible, and Creator of all things in the material and spiritual world. Irenaeus unveils God’s good purposes for humanity, along with the tragic rebellion of humanity that becomes the chief problem God will resolve over the course of his master plan for the world. As you read this chapter, observe the many expressions of the character of God, the life and blessings he gives to Adam and Eve in a garden called Paradise, and the way that the Word of God converses with the first man. On the flip side, look for the futile rebellion of Adam, Eve, and Satan against God’s good plans.*

8. By the Spirit the Father is called Most High, Almighty, and Lord of hosts,¹ so that we may learn that God is indeed the Creator of heaven and earth and all the world, the Maker of angels and humans, and Lord of all. Through him all things exist and by him all things are sustained. He is merciful, compassionate, good, and righteous. He is the God of all, both of Jews and of Gentiles, and of those who believe. He is a Father to those who believe, for in the end of times* he opened up the covenant of adoption. To the Jews he is Lord and Lawgiver, for in the intervening period, when humanity had forgotten and abandoned God, he brought them into subjection through the law (Gal 3:23–24), so that they might learn that they have a Lord who forms humanity and gives the breath of life (Gen 2:7), and that we ought to worship him day and night. To the Gentiles he is Creator and the Almighty. And to all alike he is Nourisher and King and Judge. For no one will escape from his judgment, neither Jew nor Gentile, nor a believer who sins, nor an angel. But those who now reject his goodness will know his power in judgment, as the blessed apostle says: “Not realizing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance; but according to your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will repay every person according to their works” (Rom 2:4–6). This is he who is called in the law the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, the God of the living (Exod 3:6; Mark 12:27).

1 In other words, the Holy Spirit inspired the Old Testament prophets to give the Father these titles.



Even then, the loftiness and greatness of this God are still inexpressible.

God is indeed the Creator of heaven and earth and all the world, the Maker of angels and humans, and Lord of all.

9. Now this world is encompassed by seven heavens, in which dwell countless spiritual powers and angels and archangels who offer service to God, the Almighty and Creator of all things. It is not as though God needs this service, but it is so the servants may not be inactive and useless. For this reason, the Spirit of God's activity works in many ways, and the prophet Isaiah counted seven forms of service as resting upon the Son of God, the Word, during his advent* as man. For Isaiah says,

The Spirit of God will rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of knowledge and of godliness, and the Spirit of the fear of God will fill him. (Isa 11:2–3 LXX)

Thus the first heaven, counting from above, and the one that encompasses the rest is that of wisdom; and the second after it is that of understanding; and the third, that of counsel; and the fourth, counting from above, that of might; and the fifth, that of knowledge; and the sixth, that of godliness; and the seventh, this firmament of ours, is full of the fear of this Spirit who illuminates the heavens. According to this pattern Moses received the seven-branched candlestick that shone continually in the holy place. Moses received this sacred service from a heavenly pattern, corresponding to what the

Word spoke to him: “You must make everything according to the pattern of the things that you have seen on the mountain” (Exod 25:40; Heb 8:5).

10. This God, then, is glorified continually by his Word, who is his Son, and by the Holy Spirit, who is the Wisdom of the Father of all. And their powerful agents, the agents of the Word and Wisdom, which are called cherubim and seraphim, glorify God with unceasing voices, and the entire company of the heavens offers glory to God the Father of all (Isa 6:2–4; Rev 4:8). By his Word he has established the whole world, angels included, and for the whole world he has ordained by law that all things should stay in their own domain and should not exceed the limits that are determined by God, so that each thing may fulfill its appointed task.²
11. But God formed man with his own hands, taking from the earth what was purest and finest, mixing in with the earth the right measure of his own power. First, he placed his own representation on what he formed, so that the visible appearance of man would also have a divine form—since man was formed and set on the earth as the image of God. Then, in order that the man might come to life, “He breathed into his face the breath of life” (Gen 2:7), so that the man became like God by way of both God’s breath and the way he was formed. As a result, he was free and in control of his own actions, having been made by God for the purpose of ruling over everything on the earth (Gen 1:28). And this great created world, prepared by God before the formation of man, was given to man as his domain and

2 Irenaeus may have had Jude 6 and Genesis 6:1–4 in mind here.



had everything in it. In this domain there were also servants with tasks, servants of the God who formed all things. Furthermore, a chief steward was placed over all his fellow servants and was given oversight of this domain. The servants were angels, and the chief steward was the archangel.

12. After making the man the master of the earth and all things in it, God secretly appointed him as master of those who were servants in it as well.³ These servants, however, were in their adult state, while the master, the man, was still small. For the man was just a child, and it was necessary for him to grow and thus reach his adult state. Then, in order that man might enjoy his upbringing in an abundant environment, God prepared for him a place better than this world, excelling in air, beauty, light, food, plants, fruit, water, and all other necessities for life, and this place was called Paradise.⁴ And this garden of Paradise* was so beautiful and good that the Word of God would constantly walk there, and he walked around and talked with the man (Gen 3:8), previewing what was to come—that he would one day dwell with humanity and talk with humans, and would come to them, teaching them righteousness.⁵ But man was just a child, not yet having mature judgment, and as a result he was easily deceived by the seducer.
13. And while man was walking around Paradise,* God brought all the animals to him and commanded him

3 These servants are the angels introduced in §11.

4 Paradise – The Garden of Eden.

5 As Irenaeus will explain later, appearances of God in the Old Testament are best explained as appearances of the Word of God, the preincarnate Son of God, since God the Father is invisible and transcendent over all creation.





to give them all names. And whatever Adam called a living creature, that was its name (Gen 2:19). But God also decided to make a helper for the man, and so God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone: let us make for him a helper who corresponds to him” (Gen 2:18). For among all the other living things there was no helper found that was equal and comparable to Adam. But God himself cast a trance upon Adam and made him sleep. And, in order that one work might be accomplished out of another work, since there was no sleep in Paradise,* God brought this sleep upon Adam by his will. And God took one of Adam’s ribs and filled up the flesh in its place, and he formed the rib that he took into a woman. He then brought her in this state to Adam (Gen 2:20–22). And when Adam saw her he said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of her husband” (Gen 2:23).

14. And Adam and Eve—for that is the woman’s name—were naked and were not ashamed (Gen 2:25). For they had an innocent and childlike mind, and it was impossible for them to conceive of anything that is generated in the soul by wickedness, through lustful pleasures and shameful desires. For at that time, they kept their natural state intact, since what had been breathed into their formed bodies was the breath of life. And as long as this breath remained properly ordered and retained its strength, it had no conception of things that are evil. Therefore, they were not ashamed as they kissed and embraced each other in purity, like children.

15. But God gave the man a law, to prevent him from swelling with pride and exalting himself, as if he had no master because of the authority and freedom he had been given. God gave the man the law so that he would not sin against God his Creator, overstepping his boundaries, and adopt an attitude of self-sufficient arrogance against God. God gave this law so that man might perceive that he had the Lord of all as a Master. And he placed certain limitations on him, so that, if he kept the commandment of God, he would always remain as he was—immortal. But if he did not keep the commandment, he would become mortal and be dissolved back into the earth, from where he had been formed (Gen 3:19). And this was the commandment: “You may eat freely from every tree that is in Paradise;* but from that tree alone, from which comes the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat; for in the day you eat, you shall surely die” (Gen 2:16–17).
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*God gave this law so that man might
perceive that he had the Lord of all as a Master.*

16. The man did not keep this commandment but disobeyed God. He was led astray by the angel who, because of the great divine gifts that God had given to man, was envious of him, and both corrupted himself and made the man a sinner by persuading him to disobey the commandment of God (Gen 3:1–6). Since by his lie he became the instigator of sin, the angel himself was struck down, having offended God, and he caused man to be expelled from Paradise.* And since he fell away in keeping with his own disposition,

he was called Satan in Hebrew, that is, the Apostate; but he is also called the Devil (the Slanderer). Then God cursed the serpent that carried the Devil. This curse came on the beast himself and on the angel hidden in him, that is, Satan (Gen 3:14–15; Rev 12:9; 20:2). And God removed man from his presence and relocated him at that time to a dwelling place by the road leading to Paradise,* because sinners are not allowed to live in Paradise* (Gen 3:23–24).

Discussion Questions



In §9 Irenaeus links Isaiah 11:2–3 to Christ's ministry, the furnishings of the tabernacle, and the architecture of heaven. This very creative way of reading Scripture was common in early Christianity, but it may feel quite foreign to us today. What potential benefits and drawbacks do you see in making these types of connections when reading Scripture?



Irenaeus devotes much space to the first three chapters of Genesis. What ideas does he highlight from these chapters? Why do you think these chapters are important for understanding God's grand plans for the world?



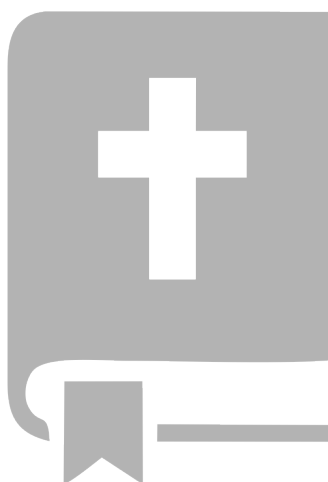
These sections describe God's loving care in creating the first man and woman, the blessings of their home in Paradise,* their advantages over the angels, and even the regular visits the Word of God made to their habitat. Which of these good gifts inspires you the most? Why? In what way will that gift be restored to us when Christ returns?



Look again at how Irenaeus describes the purpose for God giving the law (commandment) to Adam (§15). Which of these tendencies are you most susceptible to? What truths from Scripture could help you to think rightly about God's authority and your dependence on him?



Section 8 lists several attributes of God the Father. Which attribute do you need to meditate on this week? How will you recall this attribute throughout the week?



BIBLICAL STUDIES



Chapter 3

God's Purposeful Blessings across the Generations

Irenaeus continues his path through the Old Testament story in this chapter, identifying major events and characters in the purposeful work of God the Father in the world. Irenaeus is not simply giving a summary of Old Testament events. He is selecting particularly significant passages to help readers tie together the greater plans of God in history. The murder of Abel foreshadows the persecution of the righteous. The blessing of Shem leads to God's call to Abraham and the covenant he makes with him. The blessing of Japheth points to the inclusion of the Gentiles into God's family. The Passover instituted when God delivered the Israelites from Egypt foretells the sacrificial suffering of Christ. Toward the end, Irenaeus speeds up his pace and gives more of a sweeping view of events in Israel's later history (perhaps in anticipation of the time he will spend in the Psalms and Prophets later). All throughout the chapter, Irenaeus highlights the sovereign and perfect preparations God the Father was making to send Jesus, the Word, to "recapitulate in himself all things that are

in heaven and on earth” (§30). Ask God to give you a heart of wonder about the ways he was weaving together a marvelous plan to bless humanity in Christ with “the life that is truly life” (1 Tim 5:19, NIV).

17. Outside of Paradise* Adam and his wife Eve faced much adversity, going through life in the world with sorrow, toil, and groaning. For man tilled the earth under the heat of the sun, and the earth produced thorns and thistles, the punishment of sin (Gen 3:17–19). Then what is written also came to pass: “Adam was intimate with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain,” and after this “she gave birth to Abel” (Gen 4:1–2). Now the apostate angel, the one who had led man into disobedience, made him a sinner, and caused his expulsion from Paradise,* was not satisfied with his first evil act. He carried out a second evil act against the brothers: he filled Cain with his own spirit and made him a killer of his brother. So Abel died this way, killed by his brother (Gen 4:8), as a future sign that certain people would be persecuted and oppressed and slain, and that it would be the unrighteous slaying and persecuting the righteous. And God was angered even more by this, and he cursed Cain. And so it happened that every successive generation in Cain’s line became like its ancestor. And God raised up another son for Adam, in place of Abel, who had been killed (Gen 4:25).

18. Then evil spread and extended its grip on the whole human race, until only a tiny seed of righteousness remained in them. For unlawful unions took place on earth, since angels united with the daughters of the



human race; and they bore them sons who because of their extraordinary size were called giants (Gen 6:1–4). And the presents angels brought to their wives were instructions in evil, such as teaching them the powers of roots and herbs, dyes and cosmetics, the discovery of precious materials, love potions, hatreds, loves, passions, seductions, spells of witchcraft, and all sorcery and idolatry that is hateful to God.¹ When these things entered the world, evil overflowed, while righteousness receded.

19. Eventually, when God brought judgment upon the world by means of a flood, in the tenth generation after the first-formed man, only Noah was found to be righteous (Gen 7:1). And because of his righteousness he was saved, along with his wife, his three sons, and the three wives of his sons, when they were shut up inside the ark with all animals that God had ordered Noah to bring into the ark (Gen 7:13–16). And when destruction came upon all things, including both the humans and animals that were on the earth, everything kept in the ark was saved. Now the three sons of Noah were Shem, Ham, and Japheth, from whom the human race was multiplied once again (Gen 9:18–19). For these three constituted the beginning of humanity after the flood.
20. But of these three sons, one fell under a curse and the other two inherited a blessing on account of their actions. For the youngest of them, who was called Ham, received a curse after he mocked his father (Gen 9:22). He was condemned for the sin of irreverence because of his insulting offense against his father. And

1 Similar ideas are found in Jewish and Christian works that were written before Irenaeus's time.

because of Ham, the curse was passed down to all his descendants (Gen 9:25). As a result his descendants in every generation after him were cursed, growing and multiplying in sin. In contrast, his brothers Shem and Japheth obtained a blessing because of their reverence toward their father (Gen 9:26–27). And this is the curse of Ham that he received from his father Noah: “Cursed be the child, Ham; he shall be a servant to his brothers” (Gen 9:25).² When Ham grew older, he produced many descendants on the earth (Gen 10:6–20). They sprung up and spread out for fourteen generations, and then his descendants were delivered up for judgment and cut down by God. For the Canaanites and Hittites and Perezites and Hivites and Amorites and Jebusites and Gergasites and Sodomites, the Arabs, the dwellers in Phoenicia, and all the Egyptians and the Libyans descend from Ham, and they fell under the curse, which was far-reaching in its duration over the ungodly.³

21. Just as the curse advanced, so too the blessing extended to the descendants of those who had been blessed, each of them in order. The first of them, Shem, was blessed in these words: “Blessed be the Lord, God of Shem, and Ham shall be his servant” (Gen 9:26). The significance of this blessing lies in the fact that the God and Lord of all became an object of worship reserved for Shem in particular. And this blessing flourished when it

2 Another possibility is that Irenaeus wrote the “child of Ham,” referring to Canaan, as with most ancient copies of Genesis 9:25. But Irenaeus could have known of a version that included “the child Ham,” or he could have decided to keep his focus on the curse on Ham, since Ham was the head of the family that followed him.

3 Mackenzie notes that some of these locations show up in Acts 2:9–11 at Pentecost, which indicates the opportunity, at last, for a removal of the curse through Christ (*Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, 132).



reached Abraham, who appears ten generations later in the genealogy of the line of Shem (Gen 11:10–26). Therefore, the Father and God of all was pleased to be called “the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” (Exod 3:6), because the blessing of Shem extended down to Abraham. And the blessing of Japheth was as follows: “May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the house of Shem, and let Ham be his servant” (Gen 9:27). This blessing blossomed at the end of the ages, when the Lord appeared, with the calling of the Gentiles. God had enlarged this calling to include the Gentiles, for “their sound went out into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (Ps 19:4; Rom 10:18). This blessing to enlarge refers to those who are called from among the Gentiles, that is, the church. And “he [Japheth] dwells in the house of Shem” (Gen 9:27), that is, where the inheritance of the patriarchs is found, so that they [the Gentiles] would receive in Christ Jesus the rights of the firstborn. Therefore, in the order that each was blessed, each receives the fruit of that blessing through his descendants.

*Just as the curse advanced, so too the blessing extended
to the descendants of those had been blessed,
each of them in order.*

22. After the flood God made a covenant with the whole world, with all wild animals and humans, promising that he would never again use a flood to destroy all the life that was reappearing on the earth (Gen 9:9–11). And he set a sign in place for them: “When the sky

is covered with clouds, a rainbow will appear in the cloud, and I will remember my covenant and will never again destroy with water every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen 9:14–15). And he changed the human diet, permitting humans to eat meat (Gen 9:3). For ever since the time of the first-formed Adam until the flood humans had eaten only seeds and the fruit of trees, and they were not allowed to eat meat. But since the three sons of Noah were a beginning of the new human race, God blessed them so that they would multiply and increase in number, saying,

Increase and multiply, and fill the earth and rule it. And the fear and dread of you will be upon all wild animals and all birds of the air; and they will become food for you, even as the green plants are. But you shall not eat meat with its lifeblood in it, for I will also require your blood at the hand of every wild animal and at the hand of humans. Whoever sheds a person’s blood will do it at the price of one’s own blood. For in the image of God I made man. (Gen 9:1–6)

And the image of God is the Son, in whose image man was made. And for this reason he appeared at the end of times,* so that he might restore the image of humanity to be like himself.

In keeping with this covenant the human race multiplied, springing up from the descendants of the three sons. “And on the earth there was only one lip” (Gen 11:1), that is to say, one language.

23. And they arose and set out from the east, and as they traveled throughout the earth, they came to the



expansive land of Shinar,⁴ where they attempted to build a tower. They were devising a means to ascend to heaven, hoping to leave their work as a memorial to those who would come after them. The structure was made with baked bricks and tar, and their audacity increased, since they all had a common attitude, and a single language helped them carry out their plans. But to prevent their work from advancing any further, God divided their speech into different languages, so that they would no longer be able to understand one another. And so they were scattered, and they occupied the world (Gen 11:1–9). They lived in groups according to their respective languages, representing the beginning of the diverse tribes and various languages on the earth. So then, the descendants of three men occupied the earth, and one group of descendants was under the curse, and two were under the blessing. The blessing came first to Shem, whose descendants lived in the east and occupied the land of the Chaldeans.

24. In the course of time, that is, in the tenth generation after the flood, we find Abraham seeking the God who was rightfully his because of the blessing of his ancestor. Spurred on by his eager soul, Abraham went throughout the world, searching for where God was, but seemed powerless to find him. But God had mercy on him, on the one person who was silently seeking him, and God appeared to Abraham, making himself known by the Word, as by a ray of light. For he spoke to him from heaven and said to him, “Come out of your country and your relatives and your father’s household and go over into the land that I will show you” (Gen 12:1), and make

4 Shinar – Southern Mesopotamia.



your home there. And Abraham believed the voice from heaven, and even though he was seventy years old and had a wife who was also already advanced in age, he left Mesopotamia with her, taking with him Lot, the son of his late brother (Gen 12:4–5). And when he came into the land that is now called Judea, where at that time seven tribes descended from Ham lived, God appeared to him in a vision and said, “I will give this land to you and to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession” (Gen 12:7; 13:15; 17:8). He also said that his descendants would be strangers in a land that was not their own, and they would be mistreated there, being in bondage for four hundred years (Gen 15:13; Acts 7:6). But in the fourth generation they would return to the place promised to Abraham, and God would judge the people who had enslaved his descendants (Gen 15:14, 16; Acts 7:7). And in order that Abraham might know about not only the great number of his descendants but also their splendor, God brought him outside at night and said to him, “Look up to heaven, and see if you are able to count the stars in heaven: so shall your descendants be” (Gen 15:5). And when God saw that there was no hesitation in Abraham’s soul, he testified about him in Scripture, through the Holy Spirit, saying, “And Abraham believed, and it was credited to him as righteousness” (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:3). And he was still uncircumcised when he received this testimonial. But in order that the excellence of his faith might be acknowledged by a sign, God gave him circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith he had in his uncircumcised state (Rom 4:11; Gen 17:9–14).

After that a son, Isaac, was born to Abraham from his previously barren wife Sarah, just as God had promised.



And Abraham circumcised Isaac, in keeping with God's covenant with him (Gen 21:1–4). Then Jacob was born from Isaac (Gen 25:26), and in this way the ancient blessing given to Shem came to Abraham, and from Abraham to Isaac, and from Isaac to Jacob, as the Spirit allotted the inheritance to them. For God was called the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob (Exod 3:6). And Jacob had twelve sons, from whom the twelve tribes of Israel are named (Acts 7:8).

25. But when a famine came upon the whole earth, it turned out that there was food only in Egypt (Gen 41:54). So Jacob resettled in Egypt, with all of his descendants, and seventy-five people altogether relocated there (Gen 46:5–7). And after four hundred years, as the oracle had declared beforehand (Gen 15:13–14), their number became 660,000. And because they were mistreated and oppressed through cruel enslavement, and since they cried out to God, the God of their fathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob (Exod 2:23–24; 3:6–7), he brought them out of Egypt by the hand of Moses and Aaron, striking the Egyptians with ten plagues. And for the last plague he sent a destroying angel and killed the firstborn of the Egyptians, from among both the people and the cattle (Exod 7:14–12:30). He saved the children of Israel from this, revealing by means of a mystery the passion of Christ by the sacrifice of a spotless lamb, whose blood was given to be smeared on the houses of the Hebrews to ensure their safety (Exod 12:27; 1 Cor 5:7). And the name of this mystery is the *Pascha*⁵ [Passover], the source of deliverance.

5 *Pascha* – The term the early church used to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus. It is connected linguistically to the Hebrew term for Passover.



And he parted the Red Sea and brought the children of Israel safely into the desert (Exod 14:21–22). As for the Egyptian pursuers who went after them into the sea, he destroyed them all (Exod 14:23–28). This was God's judgment on those who had unjustly mistreated the descendants of Abraham.

Moses also, at God's command, built the tabernacle of testimony, a visible structure on earth of things that are spiritual and invisible in the heavens

26. In the desert Moses received the law from God, the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone, “written with the finger of God” (Exod 31:18)—and this finger of God is the Holy Spirit who is put forward from the Father (Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20)—and the commandments and regulations that he delivered to the children of Israel to observe. Moses also, at God's command, built the tabernacle of testimony, a visible structure on earth of things that are spiritual and invisible in the heavens—and the prefiguration of the church and a prophetic representation of things to come—in which were the vessels of worship, the altars, and the ark in which he placed the tablets (Heb 8:5; 9:3–4). He also appointed Aaron and his sons to be priests, assigning the priesthood to them and all their lineage, since they were the descendants of Levi. By God's word Moses had previously summoned this whole tribe for the work of sacred service in the temple of God, and he gave them the Levitical law, specifying the character and conduct of those whose continual occupation it was to carry

out the sacred service in the temple of God (Exod 28:1; Num 1:50).

27. When they drew near to the land that God had promised to Abraham and his descendants, Moses chose a man from each tribe and sent them to spy out the land, the cities in it, and the inhabitants of those cities (Num 13:1). At that time God revealed to Moses the name that alone has power to save those who believe in it; and Moses changed the name of Osee [Hoshea] the son of Nave [Nun], one of the spies who was sent, and named him Jesus [Joshua] (Num 13:16).⁶ And so Moses sent out the spies with the power of the name, believing that he would receive them back safe and sound through the guidance of the name, which in fact happened.

Now after they had gone and surveyed the land, they returned and brought with them a cluster of grapes (Num 13:23). But some of the twelve who had been sent caused great alarm among the people, saying that the cities were huge and fortified, and that the sons of giants lived there, meaning that the inhabitants would be able to hold the land. At that point all the people began to weep, refusing to believe that it was God who would grant them strength and bring them victory over everything. And they also denigrated the land and claimed it was not good, as though it were not worth taking risks for the sake of such a land (Num 13:26–33). But two of the twelve, Jesus [Joshua] the son of Nave [Nun] and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, tore their clothes because of this evil deed and urged the people not to be discouraged or lose heart, for God had given everything into their hands,

6 Irenaeus states these names in their Greek translation, from the Septuagint.* The original Hebrew forms of the names are in brackets, above.



and the land was extremely good indeed (Num 14:6–7). But when the people were not convinced and continued to refuse to believe, God changed their route, to make them wander about and to punish them in the desert. And according to the number of days the spies spent entering and returning from the land—forty days—God assigned a year for each day and kept them in the desert for forty years. And none of those who had already come of age were counted worthy by God to enter the land, because of their unbelief. The only exceptions were the two who had testified in favor of the inheritance, Jesus [Joshua] the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, as well as those who were quite young and did not know their right hand from their left. So all the unbelieving people gradually died out in the desert, receiving the due compensation for their lack of faith, while the children who grew up over the forty years replaced the number of people who had died (Num 14:26–35; 26:64–65).

28. When the forty years were completed, the people came near to the Jordan River and were assembled across from Jericho. Here Moses gathered the people together and gave them a fresh overview of everything that had happened (Num 36:13; Deut 1:3).⁷ He recounted the mighty works that God had accomplished even up to that day, preparing those who had grown up in the desert to fear God and keep his commandments, instituting for them as it were a new code of laws, adding to the one made before. And this was called Deuteronomy, and in it there are also many prophecies

7 The translation “gave a fresh overview” is from the term “recapitulated.” Here it reflects the original literary and rhetorical usage of the term (as a summary or conclusion of discourse) instead of the theological sense that is more typical in Irenaeus’s works.

written about our Lord Jesus Christ, the people, the calling of the Gentiles, and the kingdom.

29. When Moses had finished the course of his life, God said to him, “Go up to the mountain to die, for you shall not bring my people into the land” (Deut 32:49–52). So he died, according to the word of the Lord, and Jesus [Joshua] the son of Nun succeeded him (Deut 34:5, 9). He parted the Jordan River and led people across into the land. Then, when he had overthrown and destroyed the seven people groups that lived there, he divided the land among the people (Josh 3:9–17; 11:23). This is where Jerusalem is, where David was king, along with his son Solomon. Solomon built the temple in the name of God, after the likeness of the tabernacle that had been made by Moses, according to the pattern of heavenly and spiritual things (Heb 8:5).
30. The prophets were sent there by God through the Holy Spirit, and they admonished the people and turned them back to the God of their fathers, the Almighty. They also became the heralds of the arrival of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They declared that his body would blossom out from the family tree of David (Isa 11:1). According to his physical descent he would be the son of David, who was the son of Abraham through a long line of succession, while according to the Spirit, he was the Son of God (Rom 1:2–4), preexisting with the Father, begotten before all of creation. The prophets proclaimed that he would appear to the whole world at the end of times* as a man, the Word of God who would “recapitulate in himself all things that are in heaven and on earth” (Eph 1:10).



Discussion Questions



In §17, Irenaeus describes Cain's murder of Abel as the first example of unjust persecution. How do you think this theme would have encouraged the second-century Christians (including many of Irenaeus's friends) who were facing suffering and even martyrdom for the sake of Christ?



Irenaeus finds far-reaching significance to Noah's blessings for Shem and Japheth. He saw these blessings as a preview of salvation history, in which God would bless first the Jews and then the Gentiles (§21). How reasonable and helpful do you find this connection? Look up Genesis 12:1–3, Matthew 8:10–11, and Romans 1:16 as you answer this question.



Irenaeus reflects on much biblical history in a short space, showing how these different events were part of God's overall plans for the world. What has encouraged you in this big-picture overview of God's purposeful intervention in human history so far?



God's faithfulness is traced across the generations in this chapter. God blesses humanity with a new start through Noah, and his special blessings to one line of people extends from Shem, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Leaders such as Moses and Joshua continue to recognize that God is on the move in the nation of Israel. Do you see God's faithfulness to these people as part of your own spiritual history? What could you do to expand your sense of identity and see these Old Testament figures as your spiritual ancestors?



Irenaeus's review of Old Testament history necessarily includes much human sin and failure, making the need for God's intervening work all the more palpable. Our own sin should spark two responses: (1) repentance for sin and any underlying factors such as pride or unbelief, and (2) heartfelt praise and thanksgiving for Christ's forgiving and restorative ministry. How consistently do these two responses appear in your prayer life? How could you intentionally integrate these responses in your prayers?



Chapter 4

The Incarnation of the Word, the Son of God

In this chapter, Irenaeus pivots to discussing God the Son as the second article of the rule of faith. In his incarnation, Jesus repeated patterns from the creation of humanity and brought to fruition the covenantal promises made to Abraham and David.¹ The divine Son of God's incarnational ministry fulfills God's plans to rewrite history and restore humanity to its original communion with God and to eternal life. The full and true humanity of Jesus is essential to this project, so Irenaeus shows how "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14) so*

1 God has initiated special relationships with people throughout human history. He creates covenants with these people in which he defines the relationship and specifies his promised blessings to them as well as his expectations for them. God states his central goal for a covenant as this: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer 31:33; see also Exod 6:7; 2 Sam 7:24). God made a covenantal relationship with Abraham and his family, promising to bless them and to bless the nations through them (Gen 12:1–3). He also created a covenant with David, promising that one of David's descendants would reign forever as God's anointed King (Ps 89:3–4; Isa 9:6–7). Jesus began to fulfill these promises in his life, death, and resurrection, and he will complete this fulfillment when he comes again.



that Jesus could recover for humanity what it means to be the true image of God (Gen 1:26). Further stressing Jesus as fully human, Irenaeus develops parallels between Adam and Christ, Eve and Mary, and the tree in Paradise and the tree upon which Jesus died. Irenaeus also reasons that the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ cannot be divided—they all fit together as part of the whole story of Jesus’s incarnational ministry. Finally, the Jewish apostles sent by Jesus continue his work in the power of the Holy Spirit and help bring to fruition the promises that God would rescue and restore the Gentiles. Let the reality and the logic of the complete deity and humanity of Christ guide your reading of this chapter, and let these truths shape your understanding of yourself as a recipient of his redemptive ministry.*

31. So then, he [the Word] united humanity with God and established a communion between God and humanity, since we would not have been able to share in the divine, imperishable life had he not come to us. For as long as imperishability was invisible and unrevealed, it did not help us at all. Therefore, he became visible, so that in every way we might receive a share in imperishability. And since we were implicated as humans in the first-formed man Adam and thus were all in bondage to death through his disobedience, it was necessary that through the obedience of him who was made human for us we might be set free from death (Rom 5:12–19). And since death reigned over the body, it was necessary that through the body death would be destroyed and release humans from its oppression.² Thus “the Word

2 When Irenaeus refers to death being defeated “through the body,” he is affirming the reality and centrality of Jesus’s incarnation, culminating in his bodily



became flesh” (John 1:14), so that, by means of the very bodily formation in which sin had dominated, sin would be destroyed and would no longer be in us. And this is why our Lord received the same bodily formation as that of the first man, so that he might fight on behalf of the patriarchs and overcome in Adam what had struck against us in Adam.

He [the Word] united humanity with God and established a communion between God and humanity, since we would not have been able to share in the divine, imperishable life had he not come to us.

32. Now where did the substance of the first-formed man come from? It came from the will and the wisdom of God, and from virgin earth.³ “For God had not sent rain,” the Scripture says, before man was made, “and there was no man to cultivate the earth” (Gen 2:5). Therefore, while it was still virgin earth, God took dust from the earth and formed the man (Gen 2:7), making him the beginning of humanity. Since it was this very man that he recapitulated in himself, the Lord received the same distinct arrangement of embodiment, being born from a virgin by the will and the wisdom of God. In this way he would also demonstrate the likeness of Adam’s embodiment and become that very man, as was written in the beginning, who is “according to the image and likeness of God” (Gen 1:26).

death and resurrection. Jesus was able to destroy sin and death and bring us into communion with God because He was fully and truly human.

3 Irenaeus uses the idea of the creation of Adam from “virgin earth” to set up the parallel to the virgin birth of Jesus, the second Adam.

33. And just as humanity was struck down through a disobedient virgin and fell into death, it was also through the Virgin who was obedient to the Word of God that humanity, being reanimated, received life. For the Lord came to seek and recover the lost sheep (Luke 15:3–7); and it was humanity that was lost (Luke 19:10). And that is why he did not become any other kind of formation [in his human existence], but he maintained from her who descended from Adam the likeness of the first-formed man. For it was necessary for Adam to be recapitulated in Christ, so that mortality might be swallowed up by immortality (1 Cor 15:54), and for Eve to be recapitulated in Mary, so that a virgin would become a virgin's advocate and by a virgin's obedience overturn and undo a virgin's disobedience.⁴
34. And the transgression that came through a tree was undone by obedience through a tree, the obedience the Son of Man showed to God when he was nailed to the tree. Through this obedience he abolished the knowledge of evil and installed the knowledge of good. And evil is disobedience to God, just as obedience to God is good. And this is why the Word spoke via Isaiah the prophet, announcing in advance what was to come, since foretelling what was to come is what made them prophets. Therefore the Word spoke in this way through him: "I do not disobey nor dispute: I have presented my back to the scourges, and my cheeks to the blows; and I have not turned my face away from the shame of spitting" (Isa 50:5–6). Therefore, by the obedience he carried out when he obeyed to the

4 The parallel between Eve and Mary in this section resembles what Paul may be talking about in 1 Timothy 2:13–15.



point of death, hanging on the tree, he undid the old disobedience that came through the tree.

And because he himself is the Word of God Almighty, who in an invisible manner among us is universally extended throughout the whole world and holds together its length, breadth, height, and depth—for by the Word of God the whole universe is ordered and arranged—so too the Son of God was crucified in these dimensions, since he was already imprinted in the form of a cross throughout the universe.⁵ It was necessary in fact that the Son of God, in becoming visible, would produce an impression of the form of his cross in the universe, that he might display the reality of his invisible activity through a visible form. For he is the One who illuminates the heights, what is in the heavens, and holds the deep that is beneath the earth. He extends along the length from east to west, and he navigates across the breadth of the north and south, summoning those who are scattered throughout all areas of the world to the knowledge of the Father.

*Therefore, by the obedience he carried out when
he obeyed to the point of death, hanging on the tree,
he undid the old disobedience that came through the tree.*

35. So the Son fulfilled the promise that God had made to Abraham, that he would make his descendants to be like the stars of heaven (Gen 15:5; 22:17). And this is

5 In this section Irenaeus makes an intriguing parallel between the visible, physical extension of Christ on the cross and his invisible extension, reaching out in all directions in the shape of a cross, as the sustainer of the universe and the One who fills the universe with his presence.



what Christ did, when he was born of a virgin who was one of Abraham's descendants and placed those who have faith in him as "lights in the world" (Phil 2:15), justifying the Gentiles by the same faith that Abraham had. For "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" (Gen 15:6). In the same way, we too are justified by faith in God, for "the righteous will live by faith" (Hab 2:4). So "the promise to Abraham does not come through the law, but through faith" (Rom 4:13). For just as Abraham was justified by faith, and "the law was not made for the righteous" (1 Tim 1:9), in the same way we also are not justified by the law, but by faith, which is witnessed to in the law and in the prophets (Rom 3:21), and which the Word of God brings to us.

36. And he fulfilled the promise to David, for God had promised David that he would raise up "from the fruit of his womb" an eternal King whose kingdom would have no end (2 Sam 7:12–13). And this King is Christ, the Son of God who became the Son of Man: that is, who became the fruit of that Virgin who had her descent from David. That is why the promise spoke of "from the fruit of the womb," which is proper for being born from a woman, and not "from the fruit of the loins" or "from the fruit of the reins," which is proper for being generated from a man. This wording was used so that his particular uniqueness could be announced, this Fruit of the virgin body that came from David, who reigns forever over the house of David, and whose kingdom shall never end (Luke 1:33).
37. Thus, he worked out our redemption gloriously and fulfilled the promise to the patriarchs. He abolished the

former disobedience: the Son of God became the Son of David and the Son of Abraham, recapitulating these things in himself, in order to obtain life for us. “The Word of God became flesh” (John 1:14) according to the distinct arrangement that was through a virgin, to abolish death and produce life in humanity. For we were imprisoned in sin, since we were born in sinfulness and were living under the power of death.

38. But since God the Father was rich in mercy, he sent his Word, the master craftsman. When he came to save us, he descended to the very place and situation in which we found ourselves after we lost life, and he broke our prison bonds. His light appeared and eliminated the darkness of that prison, and he sanctified our birth and destroyed our death, releasing us from those same bonds that confined us. And he demonstrated the reality of the resurrection, when he himself became “the firstborn from the dead” (Col 1:18), raising up fallen humanity in himself and lifting up humanity to the heights of heaven (Eph 2:6), to the right hand of the glory of the Father. This was as God promised through the prophet, saying, “And I will raise up the fallen tabernacle of David” (Amos 9:11), referring to the bodies descended from David. This is what our Lord Jesus Christ truly accomplished by gloriously achieving our salvation, that he might truly raise us up, saving us for life with the Father.

But if anyone will not accept his birth from a virgin, how will he accept his resurrection from the dead? For there would be nothing remarkable or surprising if one who was not born did not rise from the dead. In fact, we cannot speak of a resurrection of one who came





into being without a birth, since one who is unbegotten is also immortal, and one who has not undergone birth would not undergo death either. For how could someone who did not take on the beginning of human existence experience the end of human existence?

39. So, if he was not born, neither did he die; and if he did not die, neither did he rise from the dead; and if he did not rise from the dead, neither is death conquered nor is its reign destroyed; and if death is not conquered, how can we ascend toward life, we who have fallen under the power of death from the beginning? So then, those who exclude salvation from humanity, and do not believe God's promise that he will raise them from the dead, they also despise the birth of our Lord. He underwent this birth for our sake, as "the Word of God made flesh" (John 1:14), so that he might demonstrate the reality of the resurrection of the body and "might be preeminent in everything" (Col 1:18). He is preeminent in heaven, as the firstborn of the purpose of the Father, and as the Word who perfects all things by his governance and legislation. He is preeminent on earth, then, as the firstborn of the Virgin, a just, holy, godly, good man, well-pleasing to God, perfect in every way, and saving from hell all those who follow him. For he himself is the firstborn from the dead (Rev 1:5), and the pioneer of life with God (Acts 3:15).
40. In this way, then, the Word of God "was preeminent in everything" (Col 1:18), since he is truly human and also the "Wonderful Counselor and Mighty God" (Isa 9:6), calling humanity back again into communion with God, so that by this communion with him we might have a share in the divine, imperishable life.



Therefore, he is the One who was announced by the law given through Moses and by the prophets of the Most High and Almighty God, the Son of the Father of all, the One by whom all things exist, the One who spoke with Moses. And this same One is also he who came into Judea, begotten of God by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, she who was the descendant of David and of Abraham. This Jesus, God's anointed, showed himself to be the One who was proclaimed in advance by the prophets.

41. And his forerunner was John the Baptist, who prepared the people in advance to receive the Word of life and then declared that he is the Christ, on whom the Spirit of God rested, being united with his body (John 1:32). His disciples were the witnesses of all his good works and his teachings, and his sufferings, death, resurrection, and his ascension into heaven after his bodily resurrection. These were the apostles, who were sent by him according to the power of the Spirit into the whole world, and who carried out the calling to reach the Gentiles (Acts 1:8). The apostles showed them the way of life, turning them away from idols and sexual immorality and greed, and cleansing their souls and bodies by the baptism of water and the Holy Spirit. They distributed and dispensed the Holy Spirit, whom they had received from the Lord, to those who believed. In these ways they established the churches.

With faith and love and hope they carried out this calling to the Gentiles that was foretold by the prophets. According to the mercy of God that was upon the apostles, they made that calling known through their ministry and welcomed the Gentiles into the promise



made to the patriarchs. They promised that to those who believed in and loved the Lord, and continued in holiness and righteousness and patient endurance, the God of all things had promised to bring eternal life by means of the resurrection from the dead. This resurrection is through him who died and rose again, Jesus Christ. To him God has entrusted the kingdom that is over all things, as well as authority over the living and the dead, and also the judgment. And they exhorted them by the word of truth to keep their bodies undefiled for the resurrection, and to keep their souls uncorrupted (1 Thess 5:23).

42a. For this is how it will be for those who have believed, since they have the Holy Spirit continually dwelling in them, the Spirit who was given by God in baptism and is retained by the recipients, if they walk in truth and holiness and righteousness and patient endurance. For by the power of this Spirit the resurrection becomes a reality for those who believe, when the body receives the soul again, and along with the soul, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is raised up and brought into the kingdom of God. This is the outcome of the blessing of Japheth, made known through the church in the calling of the Gentiles, who stand ready to receive their residence in the house of Shem, according to the promise of God (Gen 9:26–27).

Discussion Questions



In the context of second-century persecution and martyrdom, Christian leaders highlighted the promises of resurrected life and immortality that we receive in Christ. North American Christians today may hear about these topics only at funerals. How could a greater emphasis on the future resurrection of our bodies and the hope of sharing in the divine life of God strengthen our churches today?



Irenaeus spends significant time discussing the importance of Christ's birth to a virgin. In your own words, summarize the reasons Irenaeus believes that Christ's virgin birth is essential. Do you agree with his reasoning? Why or why not?



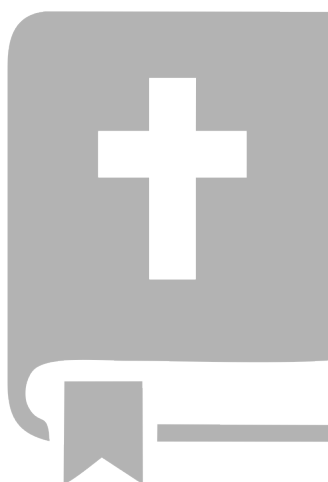
Section 35 reads as a summary of Paul's theology of salvation for the Gentiles. Followers of Christ who are Gentiles can tend to grow numb to the idea that they were adopted into God's family through Christ and now share in God's promises to Abraham. What steps could you take to regain a sense of wonder about the stunning news that God has graciously given salvation and life to believers from all nations?



In this chapter, Irenaeus surveys both the deity and humanity of Christ. Jesus is truly God, but he also became fully human in order to restore humanity and bring us into everlasting communion with God. How should the fact that Jesus is fully God and fully human shape your prayer life (Rom 8:34; Heb 4:14–16)?



At several points in this book, Irenaeus has referred to baptism and its powerful depiction of forgiveness and new life in Christ (§§3, 7, 41, 42). How often do you witness Christian baptisms? What truths do you want to celebrate when you observe or participate in future baptisms (or perhaps when you yourself are baptized)? If you are a Christian leader, how could you guide the people under your care into a greater understanding of the spiritual significance of baptism?



BIBLICAL STUDIES



Chapter 5

The Spirit's Previews of the Eternal Son of God

Irenaeus begins this chapter by referencing passages of Scripture that demonstrate Jesus was the eternal Word, the Son of God, who existed with the Father before the world was created. Next, Irenaeus shows that the Word was “on the move” in creation and redemptive history before his incarnational ministry began. The unseen and uncontained Father was not the One who appeared to God’s people at various times in the Old Testament—it was the Son. The Son is the One who is addressed as God, alongside God the Father, in multiple passages from the Old Testament. These passages announced and demonstrated before Jesus’s first advent that the One who was always with the Father would be both King of all and Savior to all who believe. Though much of §43 does not hold up well to scholarly scrutiny, the other sections present compelling glimpses into the mysterious ways the eternal Word is witnessed in various Old Testament passages. Consider the*

new possibilities this chapter unlocks for detecting the Son of God's presence and ministry in the Old Testament.

42b. The Spirit of God declared in advanced, through the prophets, that all these things would come to pass in these ways, so that those who worship God in truth might have firm faith in these things. For since these things were impossible to our nature and therefore had the potential to lead humanity into unbelief, God caused them to be announced beforehand through the prophets. That way, by foretelling them far in advance, when they at last came to pass in the same way it was foretold, we would recognize that it was God who had announced our salvation ahead of time.

43. So then, we must believe God in all things, for God is truthful in all things. That there is a Son of God, and that he existed not only before he appeared in the world but also before the world was made, was stated by Moses, who was the first to prophesy. He says in Hebrew, "*Baresith bara Elovim basan benowam samenthares.*" And this translates as, "A Son in the beginning, God then established the heavens and the earth."¹ Jeremiah the prophet also testifies about this, saying, "Before the morning star I have begotten You: and before the sun is Your name."² This name is before the creation of the world, for the stars were made at the same time as the

1 This is not a dependable conclusion from the Hebrew text of Genesis 1:1, though there is also ambiguity in how to best translate the Armenian wording. Irenaeus may have intended to bring together ideas from Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1.

2 Though Irenaeus attributes this quote to Jeremiah, it seems to originate from two psalms in the Septuagint: * Psalm 110:3 (109:3 LXX) and Psalm 72:17 (71:17 LXX).



world. And again the same prophet says, “Blessed is he who was, before he became a man,”³ since for God, the Son existed in the beginning, before the creation of the world. But from our perspective, it was only now that he was revealed [on the earth]. Before that, he did not exist as far as those of us who were ignorant of him were concerned. This is also why his disciple John, when he announced to us the identity of the Son of God, who was with the Father before the world came to be, says also that it was by him that all things were made, when he says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and apart from him nothing was made” (John 1:1–3). This demonstrates very clearly that the Word, who was in the beginning with the Father, and by whom all things came to be, is indeed his Son.

44. And then Moses records that the Son of God talked with Abraham:

And God appeared to him by the oak of Mamre at midday. And he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood before him. And he bowed down to the ground and said, “Lord, if indeed I have found favor in Your sight . . .” (Gen 18:1–3)

And in all that followed he spoke with the Lord, and it was the Lord who spoke with him. Now two of the three were angels, but one was the Son of God. So Abraham spoke with him, pleading on behalf of the

3 This quote does not match with known versions of the Old Testament. Irenaeus is referring to some source that is unknown to us and that he associated with the Old Testament Scriptures in some way. The quote does bring to mind Jesus’s allusion to Exodus 3:14–15 in John 8:58.



people of Sodom, that they might be spared destruction if at least ten righteous people were found there. And while they were speaking, the two angels descended and entered Sodom, and Lot welcomed them. Then the Scripture says, “And the Lord rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven” (Gen 19:24). In other words, the Son, the One who spoke with Abraham, was “the Lord,” and he received authority to punish the people of Sodom “from the Lord out of heaven,”⁴ that is, from the Father who rules over all things. Therefore, Abraham was a prophet and saw what would happen in the future (John 8:56). He saw that the Son of God in human form would talk with people and eat food with them, and then would bring judgment from the Father who rules over all, as seen in his authority to punish the people of Sodom.

45. Jacob also, when he went into Mesopotamia, saw him in a dream, “standing upon the ladder” (Gen 28:13), that is, upon the tree that was set up from earth to heaven, for by it those who believe in him ascend to heaven. For his passion is the means of our ascension. All such visions point to the Son of God conversing with humans and being in their midst. For this is not about the Father of all, who is not seen by the world, the Maker of all, the One who has said, “Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what kind of house would you build me, or what will be the place of my rest?” (Isa 66:1; Acts 7:49). It is not the One who “holds the dry land in his fist, and the sky in his palm” (Isa

4 Irenaeus distinguishes between the two occurrences of “the Lord” in Genesis 19:24, discerning that the first mention of “the Lord” corresponds to the Son and the second mention of “the Lord” corresponds to the Father, the Almighty.



40:12). He is not the One who stood contained in a very limited space and talked with Abraham, but it was the Word of God, who was always with humanity, who foretold what would happen in the future and taught people the things of God.

For in these events later acts for our lives were being rehearsed, the Word of God foreshadowing in a figurative way what was to come.

46. It is he who spoke with Moses in the bush, saying, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I have come down to deliver them" (Exod 3:7–8). It is he who was ascending and descending for the salvation of the oppressed, delivering us from the power of the Egyptians, that is, from all idolatry and ungodliness; and delivering us from the Red Sea, that is, from the deadly waves of the Gentiles and the bitter currents of their slander. For in these events later acts for our lives were being rehearsed, the Word of God foreshadowing in a figurative way what was to come. And sure enough, now he has liberated us from our bitter slavery to the Gentiles, and he has caused a stream of water to gush out abundantly from a rock in the desert; and that rock is the Word himself (Exod 17:6; Num 20:11; 1 Cor 10:4). And he has given us twelve springs (Exod 15:27; Num 33:9), that is, the teaching of the twelve apostles. He destroyed the disobedient people in the desert (Num 14:29; 1 Cor 10:5), but he brought those who believed in him and were infants with regard to evil into the inheritance of the patriarchs, an inheritance that not Moses but Jesus



distributes.⁵ And he also saves us from Amalek by the stretching out of his hands (Exod 17:10–13), and he brings us up into the kingdom of the Father.

47. Therefore, the Father is Lord and the Son is Lord. And the Father is God and the Son is God. For he who is begotten of God is God. According to his being and power and essence God is shown to be one God. But at the same time, according to the distinct plan of our salvation he is both Son and Father. And because the Father of all is invisible and inaccessible to creatures, those who are to draw near to God must gain access to the Father through the Son.

And still more clearly David speaks in this way about the Father and the Son: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore, God has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions” (Ps 45:6–7 [44:7–8 LXX]). This passage shows that the Son, who is God, receives from the Father, that is, from God, the throne of the eternal kingdom and the anointing oil above his companions. The oil of anointing is the Spirit, by whom he has been anointed, and his companions are the prophets, the righteous, the apostles, and all who have a share in his kingdom—his disciples.

48. And again David says,

The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool. The Lord
will send out a mighty scepter from Zion; rule in

5 Irenaeus likely suggests a double meaning here. First, Jesus (Joshua), not Moses, was the one who led the Israelites into their inheritance of the promised land. Second, Christ Jesus ultimately distributes God’s inheritance to his people.



the midst of your enemies! With you is dominion in the day of your power, in the splendor of your saints. From the womb, before the morning star, I have begotten you. The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. And the Lord on your right hand has crushed kings in the day of his wrath. He will judge among the nations, fill up the ruins with the fallen, and crush the heads of many on the earth. He will drink from the brook along the road, and therefore, he will lift up his head (Ps 110:1–7 [109:1–7 LXX])

Through these words, then, the prophet proclaims that the Lord existed before all things, and that he rules over the nations, and that he judges all humanity and the kings who currently hate him and persecute his name; for these are his enemies. And by calling him God's priest forever, the prophet declares his immortality. And when he says, "He will drink from the brook along the road, and therefore, he will lift up his head," it is because the prophet refers to the glorious exaltation of the Lord's humanity, after his humiliation and degradation.

49. And then the prophet Isaiah says, "Thus says the Lord God to my Anointed Lord, whose right hand I have held, that the nations might be obedient before him" (Isa 45:1). And as for how the Christ is called both Son of God and King of the nations, or of all humankind, David also declares that he is not only called this but indeed is the Son of God and King of all: "The Lord has said to me: You are my Son, and today I have begotten you; ask of me and I will give you the nations for



your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession” (Ps 2:7–8). These things were not said to David, for he did not rule over the nations nor over the ends of the earth, but only over the Jews. So it is evident that the promise to the Anointed to reign over the ends of the earth is to the Son of God, whom David himself confesses as his Lord, saying, “The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand” (Ps 110:1 [109:1 LXX]), and so on, as we have said before. For he means that the Father is speaking with the Son. We showed this a little earlier from Isaiah, when he said: “Thus says God to my Anointed Lord, that the nations might be obedient before him” (Isa 45:1). For these two prophets spoke about the same promise, that he would be King, and accordingly, these words of God are addressed to one and the same person, that is, to Christ, the Son of God. Since David says, “The Lord said to me,” it is necessary to note that neither David nor any of the other prophets speak for himself. For it was never a man who uttered the prophecies, but it was the Spirit of God who spoke through the prophets (2 Pet 1:20–21), conforming himself to the characteristics of the speaker and producing the words that are sometimes from Christ and other times from the Father.

50. It is therefore quite appropriate that Christ says through David that the Father himself converses with him, and it is quite fitting that he says still other things about himself through the prophets. As another example he speaks through Isaiah in this way:

And now thus says the Lord, who formed me from the womb to be his Servant, to gather Jacob and to gather Israel to himself—for I will be glorified





before the Lord, and my God will be my strength—and he says, “It will be a great thing for you to be called My servant, to establish the tribes of Jacob, and to recover the scattered ones of Israel: and I have appointed you to be a light to the Gentiles, that you might bring about salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isa 49:5–6)

51. This passage shows, first of all, that the Son of God preexisted, since the Father conversed with him and made him known to humanity before he was born. And next, it shows that he must be born a man among men, and that the same God himself would “form him from the womb,” meaning that he would be born of the Spirit of God. It shows that he must be the Lord of all humanity and the Savior of those who believe in him, both Jews and others. For “Israel” is the name of the Jewish people in the Hebrew language, from their patriarch Jacob, who was the first to be called Israel, and he calls all humanity “the Gentiles.” And the passage shows that the Son calls himself the “servant” of the Father, because of his submission to the Father, for among men as well every son is his father’s servant.

*Therefore Christ,
being the Son of God before all creation,
is with the Father.*

52. Therefore Christ, being the Son of God before all creation, is with the Father. And being present both with the Father and with humanity, he is also King of



all, since the Father has subjected all things to him. And he is Savior to those who believe in him. Such truths are demonstrated by passages of Scripture like these. Though it is not possible here to put together an orderly review of every passage of Scripture, from the passages just presented you will also be able to understand others that are communicated in a similar way, as long as you believe in Christ and seek wisdom and understanding from God to understand what has been spoken by the prophets.



Discussion Questions



The way Irenaeus reads the Old Testament (looking for Jesus) and the New Testament (from a deeply Trinitarian framework) is often quite different from how Christians today read Scripture. What do you think might cause hesitation to read the Bible this way? What else could explain why this way of reading the Bible is less common for Christians today?



Compare this chapter with Hebrews 1:5–14. What are some similarities and differences between the ways these works connect Christ to the Old Testament?



Irenaeus discerns that it was God the Son who visited Abraham, Jacob, and Moses. These visits previewed the way Jesus would interact with the people of this world: sometimes to deliver them, sometimes to judge, but sometimes simply to spend time with them. What impact does it make on your heart and affections toward Jesus to know that he becomes present in our world, with the people of this world?

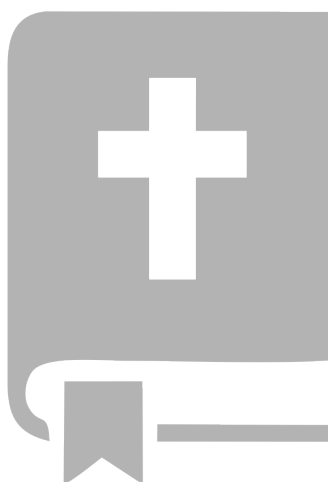


Some of these paragraphs celebrate Jesus as the King of all nations, using words and images such as King, Lord, throne, rule, and reign. What hymns or modern worship songs help remind you that Jesus is the King of the world and prompt you to offer heartfelt praise to him?



In §52, Irenaeus says that “from the passages just presented you will also be able to understand others that are communicated in a similar way.”

What change in habits or perspectives would help you begin to meet Jesus more consistently when you read the Old Testament? What resources might help you read the Old Testament with an awareness of the work and presence of Jesus? Some resources to consider are listed in the “Continuing the Conversation” appendix in the Resources for Application.



BIBLICAL STUDIES



Chapter 6

Prophetic Titles of the Son and Predictions of His Reign

This chapter looks more closely at the identity and ministry of Christ, as foretold in the Old Testament. Several passages from the Old Testament promise the birth of an extraordinary Son who would be an agent of God's saving reign in the world. The prophesied titles of Jesus, including "Christ," "Emmanuel," and "Wonderful Counselor," further underscore the goal and magnitude of his ministry, which was in motion throughout the Old Testament but has been revealed fully in his incarnation. Next, Irenaeus looks at the lineage, birth, and kingship of Jesus. The prophets announce that a King would emerge from the line of Judah and be born in Bethlehem as the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant.¹ His reign would create peace and bring together those who have been raised up to

¹ Davidic Covenant – When Joseph blessed his sons, God indicated that one of Judah's descendants would reign as God's specially chosen king (Gen 49:8–12; see also Num 24:9, 14–19). God made a covenant with Judah's descendant David, promising that the anticipated king would come from his family (2 Sam 7:5–16). Micah prophesied that this king would be born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2–4).



new and eternal life in Christ through his resurrection. As you read this chapter, be alert for the ways the prophets painted pictures beforehand of both Jesus's kingship and his suffering on the cross. Let these vivid pictures further enrich your view of Jesus and his ministry.

53. And it was prophesied that this Christ, who was with the Father, being the Word of the Father, would be incarnate and become a man and undergo a birth. He would be born of a virgin and live with humanity, when the Father of all would bring about his incarnation. Isaiah says it this way: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, the virgin will conceive in her womb and give birth to a Son, and you will call him Emmanuel. He will eat butter and honey. Before he knows or chooses evil he will choose the good, for before the child knows good or evil, he will reject the evil to choose the good" (Isa 7:14–16). So the prophet proclaimed that he would be born of a virgin and declared beforehand that he would be truly human, since he says that he would eat, he would be called "a child," and a name would be given to him, following the custom for those who have just been born.

And he has a double name in the Hebrew language: Messiah, meaning Christ, and Jesus, meaning Savior. And the two names both refer to deeds he accomplished. For he is named Christ because through him the Father anointed and adorned all things, and because in his advent* as a man he was anointed with the Spirit of God his Father. He says this very thing about himself through Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, and



he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor” (Isa 61:1). And he is named Savior because he became the cause of salvation for those who at that time were delivered by him from all kinds of sickness and from death. And to those after them who believed in him, he is the securer of the eternal salvation to come.

For he is named Christ because through him the Father anointed and adorned all things, and because in his advent as a man he was anointed with the Spirit of God his Father.*

54. So this is why he is Savior. As for the name Emmanuel, it is interpreted, “God with us” or as a longing expressed by the prophet, such as, “May God be with us” (Matt 1:23; Isa 8:8, 10). So this name is a representation of the good news, for he says, “Behold, the virgin will conceive in her womb and give birth to a Son” (Isa 7:14), and that he, being God, is going to be with us. So, with a sense of astonishment about these things (1 Pet 1:10), the prophet proclaims the future occurrence that “God will be with us.”

The same prophet in another place once again says this about his birth: “Before she who labored gave birth, and before the pains of labor came on, a male child was delivered from her womb” (Isa 66:7). Thus, the prophet announces his unexpected birth from a virgin. The same prophet says again, “Unto us a Son is born, and unto us a child is given, and his name is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God” (Isa 9:6).

55. The prophet calls him “Wonderful Counselor” even of the Father, which shows that the Father works all things

together with him. This is like what is found in the first book of Moses, called Genesis: “And God said, ‘Let us make man in our image and after our likeness’” (Gen 1:26). For it is apparent here that the Father is speaking to the Son, the Wonderful Counselor of the Father. And he is also our Counselor, giving advice without compelling us with his authority as God, even though he is “Mighty God,” as the prophet says. But he gives advice so that we might reject ignorance and welcome knowledge, and depart from error and come to the truth, and put away perishability and receive imperishability.

56. And again Isaiah says, “And they will wish that they had been burned with fire. For unto us a child is born, and unto us a Son is given, whose government is placed on his shoulders. And his name is called Messenger of great counsel,² for I will bring peace on the rulers, and peace and health to him. Great is his government, and of his peace there is no end, on the throne of David and on his kingdom, to direct and support it in righteousness and justice from this time forward and forevermore” (Isa 9:5–7 [9:4–6 LXX]). For by this it is proclaimed that the Son of God will be begotten and will be the eternal King. But the words “they will wish that they had been burned with fire” refer to those who do not believe in him and have done to him all that they have done. For they will say at the judgment, “I would rather have been burnt with fire before the Son of God was born, than not to have believed in him once he was born.” Because for those who died before Christ

2 Irenaeus returns to the language of prominent Greek Septuagint* manuscripts with “Messenger of great counsel.” In the previous two sections, his wording “Wonderful Counselor” and “Mighty God” align with the Hebrew manuscript tradition.



appeared there is hope that when they are resurrected at the judgment they will obtain salvation. This includes whoever feared God and died in a state of righteousness and had the Spirit of God within them, such as the patriarchs and the prophets and the righteous. But for those who did not believe in Christ after he appeared, there will be inescapable punishment at the judgment. Now the wording “whose government is placed on his shoulders” refers allegorically to the cross on which his shoulders were nailed. For the cross, the thing that was and is a reproach for him, and through him also for us, is the very thing that the prophet says is “His government,” a sign of his kingdom. And when he says, “Messenger of great counsel,” this means the Messenger of the Father, whom he has made known to us.

57. Thus, as it is clear from what has just been said, these truths were made known beforehand by the prophets: that the Son of God would be born, and that he would be born in a certain way, and that he would be shown to be the Christ. And in addition to this it was proclaimed beforehand with words such as these the location of his birth and the people among whom he would be born.³

Moses,⁴ in Genesis, says it in this way: “There will not fail to be a ruler from Judah, nor a leader from his family line, until he comes, for whom it is reserved;

3 The discussion of Genesis 49:10–11 that follows strongly resembles material from Justin Martyr’s *First Apology* (chapter 32), which was written several decades before Irenaeus’s work. There is scholarly debate over whether Irenaeus is using Justin as a direct source, or whether both authors drew from a common source (see Mackenzie, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, 186–90).

4 The prophecy is found in the books of Moses, the first five books of the Old Testament, even though it was spoken by Jacob as a Spirit-inspired blessing over his sons (Gen 49).

and he will be the expectation of the nations; he will wash his robe in wine, and his garment in the blood of grapes” (Gen 49:10–11). And Judah, a son of Jacob, is the ancestor of the Jews, from whom they also take their name. And there did not fail to be a ruler among them, nor a leader, until the coming of Christ. But from the time of his coming their instruments of war were taken away, the land of the Jews was handed over in subjection to the Romans, and they no longer had their own ruler or leader. For he had come, the One “for whom is reserved” the kingdom in heaven. He also “washed his robe in wine, and his garment in the blood of grapes.” This robe and also his garment are those who believe in him, whom he also cleansed, redeeming us with his blood. And his blood is said to be the blood of the grape. For just as no human makes the blood of the grape, but God creates it, and “makes glad” those who drink it (Ps 104:15 [103:15 LXX]), so too his body and blood were not the workings of humans, but God makes them. “The Lord himself gave the sign” of the Virgin, referring to the Emmanuel who was from the Virgin (Isa 7:14) and who also “makes glad” those who drink of him, or those who receive his Spirit, who is an everlasting gladness. And that is why he is the “expectation of the nations” (Gen 49:10) of those who hope in him, because we expect that he will reestablish the kingdom.

58. And again Moses says,⁵ “A star will rise up out of Jacob, and a leader will spring up out of Israel” (Num

5 As with the previous reference, “Moses” refers to material found in the first five books of the Old Testament. In this case, the actual prophecy of Numbers 24:7 comes from the mouth of Balaam, who was compelled by the Holy Spirit to speak true and encouraging prophecies about Israel’s future (Num 22–24).



24:17). This clearly indicates that the distinct plan of his incarnation would be realized among the Jews. And as one who was born “out of Jacob” and from the tribe of Judah, he would come down from heaven to carry out this distinct plan. For “a star” appears in heaven, and “leader” means king; and he is in fact the King of all those who are redeemed. And at his birth this star actually appeared to the magi who lived in the east; and through this they learned that the Christ had been born (Matt 2:1). Then they came to Judea, led by the star, until the star reached Bethlehem, where the Christ had been born. The star entered the house where the child was lying wrapped in swaddling clothes, and it stood over his head, showing the magi the Son of God, the Christ (Matt 2:9).

59. Moreover, Isaiah himself also says this: “And a rod will spring out from the root of Jesse, and a flower will come up from his root. And the Spirit of God will rest upon him; the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of knowledge and godliness, and the Spirit of the fear of God will fill him. He will not judge by appearance, nor will he reprimand by hearsay, but he will bring judgment for the lowly, and show mercy to the lowly of the earth. And he will strike the earth with the word of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he will slay the ungodly. And righteousness will be the belt around his waist, and his sides will be wrapped in truth. And the wolf will feed together with the lamb, and the leopard with the goat, and the calf and the lion will pasture together, [and a little child will lead them. And the ox and bear will feed together, and their young will be





together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox].⁶ And an infant will thrust his hand into the pit of the viper, and into the nest of the den of vipers, and they will not hurt him. And in that day there will be the root of Jesse, and the One who will rise up to rule the nations: and in him the nations will hope: and his rising up will be an honor” (Isa 11:1–10 LXX). By these words the prophet says that the Christ was to be born of her who was from the family line of David and of Abraham. For Jesse was the descendant of Abraham and the father of David; and David’s descendant the Virgin was the one who conceived Christ. Now as for the mention of “the rod” (Isa 11:1), this is why Moses displayed miracles to Pharaoh with a rod, and for yet others the rod is a symbol of power.⁷ And “flower” refers to his body, for it blossomed forth by the action of the Spirit, as we have already said.

60. As for the words, “He will not judge by appearance, nor will he reprimand by hearsay: but he will bring judgment for the lowly, and show mercy to the lowly of the earth” (Isa 11:3–4), the prophet points out the deity of Christ even more. For to judge impartially, not favoring the noble but granting to the lowly what is just and equitable, is in keeping with the fullest extent of the righteousness of God. For God is not subject to anyone’s influence, nor is he moved by anyone except the righteous. And to have mercy is the distinct

6 The portion in brackets is absent in the Armenian text. It was likely omitted accidentally in the copying process of *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, since it is included in the Septuagint* and in Irenaeus’s quotation of the passage in *Against Heresies* (5.33.4). See Behr, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, 113 n. 156.

7 It is possible that “the Virgin” Mary, rather than Jesus, is identified as “the rod” in this section.



attribute of God, who also has the power to save by his mercy. And this description, “He will strike the earth with the word of his mouth and slay the ungodly” (Isa 11:4) with a word alone, is said of God, who makes all things happen by a word. And in saying, “righteousness will be the belt around his waist, and his sides will be wrapped in truth” (Isa 11:5), the prophet declares Christ’s human form, and truly the full extent of his own righteousness.

61. Now as to the harmony and peace between the different kinds of animals who are opposed by nature and enemies to each other (Isa 11:6–7), the elders say that this will be truly realized at the future advent* of Christ, when he is going to reign over all.⁸ For already, when the words are taken in their symbolic sense, the prophet speaks about people from different races and customs gathering together as a community of harmony and peace through the name of Christ.⁹ For alongside the righteous, who are likened to calves and lambs and goats and infants, they will no longer harm anyone, even though formerly, in their insatiable appetites, they were like wild beasts, both men and women, to the point that some of them were like wolves and lions, ravaging the weak and waging war on their rivals. Likewise, the women resembled leopards or vipers, using deadly poisons to kill perhaps even their loved ones, or they were driven by lustful desire. But coming together in

8 In §3 Irenaeus identified the “elders” as “the disciples of the apostles,” referring to church leaders such as Bishop Papias of Hierapolis and Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna. Eusebius reports that Irenaeus had actually sat under Polycarp’s teaching many years before (*Church History* 5.5.8, 5.20.4).

9 This is the probable sense of the original text, but it could also have been “people from different races that nonetheless have the same dispositions.”



one name, they would obtain righteous conduct, by the grace of God, changing their wild and untamed nature. And this has already happened. For those who were formerly the most wicked, to the extent that they did not refrain from any work of ungodliness, once they learned of Christ and believed in him, from that moment they were changed, to the extent that they do not refrain from any superabundance of righteousness. This is how great the transformation is that faith in Christ, the Son of God, brings about for those who believe in him. And the prophet says, “He will rise up to rule the nations” (Isa 11:10), because Christ, having died, would rise again, and be acknowledged and believed in as the Son of God and King. This is why he says, “and his rising up will be an honor” (Isa 11:10), referring to his glory, for it was when he was raised that he was glorified as God.

62. For this reason the prophet again says, “In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen” (Amos 9:11). He indicates clearly that the body of Christ, a body born from the line of David, as we said before, would rise from the dead after having died. For the body is called a “tabernacle” (see 2 Cor 5:1, for instance).

These passages of Scripture make known all of these things: that the Christ, who was a descendant of David in his earthly life, would be the Son of God (Rom 1:3–4), and that after his death he would rise again, and that he would be a man in form and appearance but God in power, and that he would be judge of the whole world, and that he alone would bring righteousness and would save.



63. And again the prophet Micah speaks of the place where Christ would be born, that it would be in Bethlehem in Judea: “And you, Bethlehem of Judea, are you the least among the cities of Judah? For out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel” (Mic 5:2 [5:1 LXX]; Matt 2:6). And Bethlehem is the homeland of David, so that Christ is not only from David’s family line through the Virgin who gave birth to him, but also because he was born in Bethlehem, the native land of David.
64. And then David says that the Christ would be born from his family line, speaking in this way: “For the sake of David your servant do not turn away the face of your Anointed. The Lord has sworn truth to David, and he will not disappoint him. From the fruit of your body I will set a King on your throne, if your sons will keep my covenant and my testimonies that I covenanted with them; and their Son [will reign] forever” (Ps 132:10–12 [131:10–12 LXX]). But none of David’s sons reigned forever, nor was their kingdom forever, for it has been destroyed. The exception is this King, who was born of David, that is, Christ. All these testimonies about his physical line of descent explicitly indicate both his family line and the place where he would be born, so that no one would look for the Son of God to be born among the Gentiles or elsewhere, but only in Bethlehem of Judea, from among the descendants of Abraham and David.
65. And the description of his entry into Jerusalem, which was the capital of Judea, where both his royal seat and the temple of God were, is given by the prophet Isaiah: “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, the King



is coming to you, humble and sitting on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Isa 62:11; Zech 9:9; Matt 21:5). Jesus was indeed sitting on a donkey’s colt when he entered Jerusalem, while the crowds were spreading out their garments for him to ride upon. And “the daughter of Zion” refers to Jerusalem.

Therefore, the prophets announced that the Son of God would be born, and how and where he would be born, and that he was the Christ, the one eternal King.

66. Therefore, the prophets announced that the Son of God would be born, and how and where he would be born, and that he was the Christ, the one eternal King. And again let us now speak of how they foretold that, after he was born among humanity, he would heal those whom he healed, and raise the dead whom he raised, and be hated and despised and flogged and put to death and crucified, even as he was hated and despised and put to death.



Discussion Questions



The idea of authority is something that many in our world push back against. Why do you think people have such a problem with authority—both the concept and the actual people in authority? How could we explain Christ's authority, as described in this chapter, in a compelling way to those around us?



Review Genesis 49:10–11, Numbers 24:17, Isaiah 11:1–10, Micah 5:2–4, and Psalm 132:10–12 as you contemplate Jesus's fulfillment of these passages. What would you say to someone who thought that these were just scattered prooftexts about Jesus? How do these passages tie together thematically or progressively to tell a fuller story of God's purposeful work in the world?



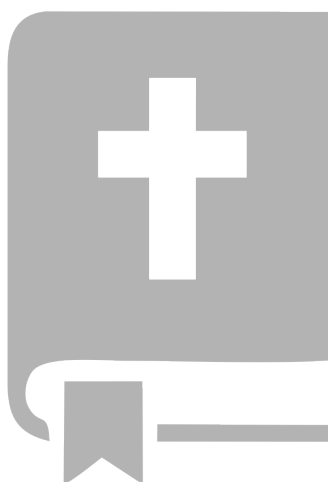
Much of Jesus's character as King shines through in this chapter. Which aspects of Jesus's kingship create the most wonder for you, and what type of response do these characteristics inspire in you?



Section 61 describes the life transformation that diverse believers in Christ experience when they find new life in Christ. What are some healthy ways your church or ministry could celebrate the growth and restoration that the Spirit of Christ is creating in believers' lives, without creating a culture of perfectionism or comparison?



What gaps in knowledge of the Old Testament story or its themes, if addressed, would help better prepare you to grasp and teach others to grasp Christ's fulfillment of God's eternal plans for humanity? What reading schedule or other resources could help you address these gaps this year?



BIBLICAL STUDIES



Chapter 7

The Promised Suffering and Glory of Jesus

When Jesus explained the Old Testament Scriptures to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, he focused specifically on how the Scriptures foretold the suffering and glory of Christ (Luke 24:25–27; cf. 1 Pet 1:10–11). This chapter gives a survey of those same two themes. First, using primarily Isaiah 53 and psalms of lament, Irenaeus captures both the stark reality of Jesus’s suffering and its wonderful purpose. The Old Testament presents the physical agonies, the unjust treatment, the betrayals, and the rejections that Jesus would experience as a righteous sufferer. It also envisions the purpose of his sufferings: that the suffering was for our salvation and for the peace and unification of believers in Christ. But suffering is not the end of Jesus’s story. Using more passages from the Psalms, Irenaeus presents the vindication and eternal kingship of the righteous sufferer, fulfilled in Jesus’s resurrection, ascension, and ongoing reign at the right hand of God. This chapter’s



sustained focus on Jesus's suffering and glory allows us to treasure their significance for our salvation and communion with God.

67. And first of all, about his healings Isaiah says this: “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases” (Isa 53:4; Matt 8:17). This meant that he would take them and would bear them [in the future], for there are passages in which the Spirit of God, through the prophets, communicates things that would one day take place as having already occurred. For with God, whatever is approved and predetermined to take place is counted as having already occurred. And the Spirit, who takes into account the time in which the prophecy would be fulfilled, selects the words accordingly. And the prophet mentions the different kinds of healing, saying, “In that day the deaf will hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind that are in the darkness and dense fog will see” (Isa 29:18). And the same prophet says again, “Be strong, you weak hands and faltering knees. Be comforted, you who are timid in your thinking. Be strong, and do not fear. Behold, our God administers judgment, and he will administer it. He will come and save us. Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will hear. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of those who cannot speak will speak plainly” (Isa 35:3–6). And as for the raising of the dead, the prophet says this: “The dead will be raised, and those who are in the tombs will be awakened” (Isa 26:19). Doing these things would result in people believing that he is the Son of God.



For with God, whatever is approved and predetermined to take place is counted as having already occurred.

68. And Isaiah says this about him being despised and flogged and finally put to death: “Behold, my Son will understand, and he will be exalted and glorified greatly. Just as many will be astonished at you, so will they regard your appearance as being without glory. And many nations will be amazed, and kings will shut their mouths, for those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand. O Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? We have brought our report before him: like a child, like a root in a dry ground, he had no stately form or glory. We saw him, and he had no stately form or beauty, but his form was without honor, inferior to that of other men. He was a man condemned to beatings and familiar with suffering, because his face was turned away, dishonored, and disregarded. He bears our sins, and for our sakes endures distress, and we regarded him to be doomed to pain, beatings, and mistreatment. But he was wounded on account of our transgressions and was tormented because of our sins. The chastisement that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we were healed” (Isa 52:13–53:5). These words indicate that he would be flogged, as also David says, “And I became flogged” (Ps 73:14 [72:14 LXX]; see also Ps 38:17 [37:18 LXX]). Now David was never flogged, but Christ was, when the order was given that he be crucified. The Word himself again says by Isaiah,



“I gave my back to flogging, and my cheeks to blows: and I did not turn away my face from the shame of spitting” (Isa 50:6). And Jeremiah the prophet says the same thing: “He will give his cheek to the one who strikes him, and he will have his fill of insults” (Lam 3:30). All these things Christ endured.

69. The text from Isaiah continues: “By his wounds we were healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; all people have strayed in their journey; and the Lord has given him over for our sins” (Isa 53:6). So it is clear that it was by the will of the Father that these things were accomplished in him for the sake of our salvation. Then he says, “And through his mistreatment, he did not open his mouth. He was led like a sheep to be slaughtered, silent as a lamb before his shearers” (Isa 53:7). Notice how the prophet announces the way that Christ approaches his death voluntarily. And when the prophet says, “In his humiliation his judgment was taken,” (Isa 53:8), he describes the manifestation of his humiliation: for the taking of judgment was done while he was in his lowly form. Now this “taking” of judgment results in salvation for some and destruction for others. For there is a concept of “taking on” by some and a “taking off” from others. So it is with the judgment: it is “taken on” by some, and they have it as their destruction, while others have it “taken off,” and they are saved from it. Therefore, those who crucified him took it upon themselves to judge, and in doing so they refused to believe in him, so that this judgment “taken on” by them resulted in their destruction. But the judgment is “taken off” those who believe in him, and they are no longer under it. And this judgment,



which is by fire, will be the destruction of unbelievers at the end of the world.

70. Then the prophet says, “Who will tell of his lineage?” (Isa 53:8). This was said to straighten out our thinking, so that we would not despise him as an unimpressive man because of the outrage of his sufferings. For he who endured all of this has an indescribable lineage, and by lineage he means “pedigree,” referring to his Father, who is indeed indescribable. Recognize therefore that such is the pedigree of him who endured these sufferings; and do not despise him because of the sufferings that he intentionally endured for your sake, but instead fear him because of his pedigree.
71. And in another place Jeremiah says, “The Spirit of our face, Christ the Lord; how was he caught in their snares, of whom we said, ‘we will live under his shadow among the nations’?” (Lam 4:20 LXX). Scripture announces that, being God’s Spirit, Christ was to become a man who was capable of suffering. Not only so, but as if astonished by his suffering, it announces that he would endure suffering in such a way that we would “live under his shadow.” The verse calls his body a shadow, because just as a shadow comes from a body, so also Christ’s body comes from his Spirit. But by “shadow” it also signifies the lowliness and contemptibility of his body, for just as the shadow of a straight and upright body is found on the ground and is trampled upon, so too was the body of Christ thrown to the ground and trampled upon, so to speak, during his sufferings. And Scripture names Christ’s body a shadow, because

the glory of the Spirit overshadowed it and covered it.¹ Furthermore, many times when the Lord was passing by, people in the clutches of various diseases were placed alongside the road, and when his shadow fell over them they were healed.

72. And again the same prophet says this about the sufferings of Christ: “Observe how the Righteous [One] has perished, and no one takes it to heart, and righteous men are being taken away, and no one notices it. For the Righteous [One] has been taken away from the presence of wickedness: his burial will be peace; he has been taken up from their midst” (Isa 57:1–2). And who else is perfectly righteous other than the Son of God, who makes righteous those who believe in him, who are persecuted and put to death, just as he was? In saying “His burial will be peace,” the prophet indicates how he died for the sake of our salvation, for it is in the peace of salvation that he died. And the words also reveal that by his death those who previously were hostile to one another, once they believed together in him, would have peace with one another and become friends because of their common faith in him, which is what has happened (Eph 2:14–16). And with the words, “He has been taken up from their midst,” the prophet refers to his resurrection from the dead, for he was no longer seen as one dead after being buried.

About the fact that after he died and rose again he would remain immortal, the prophet says this: “He asked you for life, and you gave it to him—length of days for ever and ever” (Ps 21:4 [20:5 LXX]). Why does it say, “He

1 This follows the gist of J. A. Robinson's translation, and it may allude to the overshadowing of the Spirit in the conception of Jesus (Luke 1:34).

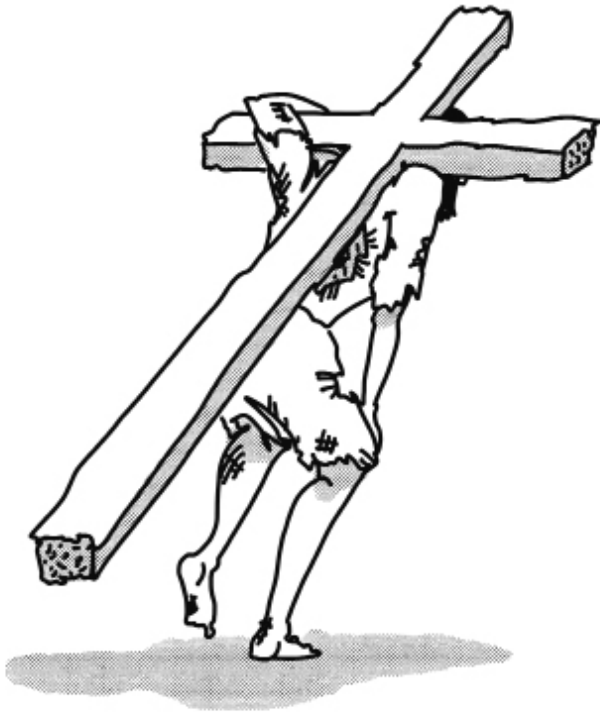


asked for life,” if he was about to die? It is because he is proclaiming his resurrection from the dead, and that with his resurrection from the dead, he is immortal. For he received both life, so that he would rise again, and length of days forever and ever, so that he would be imperishable.

73. And again David says this about the death and resurrection of Christ: “I lay down and slept; I awoke again, for the Lord supported me” (Ps 3:5 [3:6 LXX]). David did not say this about himself, for he was not raised after he died. But the Spirit of Christ, who also spoke through the other prophets, says this about him here, through David: “I lay down and slept; I awoke again, for the Lord supported me.” He calls death “sleep” because Christ is now risen from the dead.
74. And David says this about the sufferings of Christ: “Why have the nations raged and the peoples devised vain plans? The kings of the earth have risen up, and the rulers have assembled together against the Lord and against his Anointed” (Ps 2:1–2). And so Herod the king of the Jews and Pontius Pilate the governor under Claudius Caesar came together and condemned Christ to be crucified.² Herod was frightened that Jesus might oust him from his kingship, as if Jesus were an earthly king. And Pilate was compelled by Herod and the Jews around him to deliver Jesus, reluctantly, to death, with the pressure that if he did not carry this out, he would be setting himself in opposition to Caesar by freeing a man who was being called a king.

2 Irenaeus is mistaken about Pilate serving under Claudius Caesar. This error corresponds to his incorrect assumption about the length of Jesus’s ministry seen in *Against Heresies* 2.22.4–6 and inspired in part by John 8:57.

75. And the same prophet says this about the sufferings of Christ: “But you have rejected and despised us; you have cast off your Anointed. You have renounced the covenant with your Servant; you have cast his sanctuary to the ground. You have broken down all his defenses; you have reduced his strongholds to trembling. Those who passed by on the road have plundered him; he has become a reproach to his neighbors. You have exalted the right hand of his oppressors; you have made his enemies rejoice over him. You have turned away the help of his sword, and you have not given him support in the battle. You have deprived him of purification; you have toppled his throne to the ground. You have shortened the days of his time and have covered him with shame” (Ps 89:38–45 [88:39–46 LXX]). The prophet thus made it clear that the Christ would suffer these things and that it would be by the will of the Father. For it was by the will of the Father that Christ would endure his sufferings.
76. And Zechariah says this: “Awake, my sword, against my Shepherd, and against the Man, my companion. Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered” (Zech 13:7). This happened when Christ was arrested by the Jews, for of all the disciples abandoned him (Mark 14:50), fearing that they would die with him. For even they did not yet unwaveringly believe in him, until they saw him risen from the dead.
77. And again he says in the Twelve Prophets, “And they bound him and brought him as a present to the king” (Hos 10:6). So Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea, and at that time he was an enemy of Herod, the king of the Jews. But then, after Christ had been brought to



him, Pilate sent him bound to Herod, giving Herod an opportunity to question Christ and learn whatever he wanted to know about him. Thus, in Christ's ordeal Pilate found a convenient occasion to be reconciled with the king (Luke 23:7–12).

78. Then in Jeremiah he announces his death and descent to hell in this way: "And the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, remembered his dead, who in times before had slept in the dust of the earth; and he came down to them, to bring the good news of his salvation, to deliver them."³ In this place he also provides the purpose of his death: his descent to hell was for the salvation of those who had died.
79. And again, Isaiah says this about the cross of Christ: "I have stretched out my hands all day long to a disobedient and contentious people" (Isa 65:2). And this is a sign indicating the cross. And even more clearly, David says, "Wild dogs encircled me, a gathering of evildoers surrounded me; they pierced my hands and my feet" (Ps 22:16 [21:17 LXX]). And again he says, "My heart became like melted wax inside of me, and they have scattered my bones" (Ps 22:14 [21:15 LXX]). And then he says, "Spare my soul from the sword and my body from nailing; for a gathering of evildoers has risen up against me" (Pss 22:20 [21:21 LXX]; 119:120 [118:120 LXX]; 86:14 [85:14 LXX]). All of this clearly signifies his crucifixion. And Moses says this same thing to the people: "And your life will be hanging before your eyes,

3 The origin of this quotation is unknown, though Justin Martyr uses it before Irenaeus does. Justin claims that the Jews had removed this passage from the writings of Jeremiah (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 72–73), but there is no additional evidence to support this claim.



and you will be afraid day and night, and you will have no assurance of your life” (Deut 28:66).

80. And again David says, “They observed me: they divided my garments among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing” (Ps 22:17–18 [21:18–19 LXX]). And, in fact, at his crucifixion the soldiers divided his clothes among themselves, according to their custom. They tore the coat, but since the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, they cast lots, so that the one chosen by lot would get it (John 19:23).
81. Jeremiah the prophet again says this: “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him who was put up for sale by the children of Israel; and they gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord commanded me” (Matt 27:9–10; Jer 19:1–13; 32:6–15; Zech 11:12–13).⁴ Thus Judas, who was one of Christ’s disciples, made an agreement with the Jews when he saw that they wanted to kill him, because they had been unmasked by him.⁵ So he took thirty official coins and betrayed Christ. And then when he was remorseful for what he had done, he gave the silver back to the Jewish leaders and hanged himself. But since the leaders did not think that it was right to add it to their treasury, because it was the price of blood, they used it to buy a potter’s field, as a place to bury foreigners (Matt 27:3–7).

4 The quote is from Matthew 27:9–10, which similarly mentions the prophet Jeremiah as a source. It was common in Jewish and Christian exegetical practices to combine sources with similar wording or that supported a common theme, while referring to only one source.

5 This phrase could be translated instead as “because he had been rebuked by him,” which would refer to Jesus’s rebuke of Judas rather than his unmasking of the Jewish leaders.



82. And at his crucifixion, when he asked for a drink, they gave him vinegar mixed with gall to drink (Matt 27:34, 48). This very thing had been announced through David: “They gave me gall for my food, and they gave me vinegar to drink for my thirst” (Ps 69:21 [68:22 LXX]).
83. Next, it is written that when Christ was raised from the dead, he would then ascend to heaven, as David says: “The chariots of God are ten thousandfold, and there are thousands of charioteers. The Lord among them in Zion, in his holy place, has ascended on high; he led captives in his wake, and he gave gifts to men” (Ps 68:17–18 [67:18–19 LXX]; Eph 4:8). By saying he led captives, he refers to destroying the rule of the apostate angels. He also identified the place where he was to ascend from the earth to heaven. For “from Zion,” he says, “the Lord has ascended on high.” As it happened, across from Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives, after he was raised from the dead, Jesus assembled his disciples and instructed them about the kingdom of heaven (Acts 1:3). And he was taken up in their sight, and they saw how the heavens were opened to receive him (Acts 1:9).
84. And David makes the same point again: “Lift up your gates, you rulers; and be lifted up, you everlasting gates, and the King of glory will come in” (Ps 24:7 [23:7 LXX]). And the “everlasting gates” are the heavens. Because the Word descended while invisible to creatures, he was not known to them in his descent. But because “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14), he was visible in his ascension. Then the powers that saw him, the angels here below, cried out to those



who were in the firmament above: “Lift up your gates; and be lifted up, you everlasting gates, that the King of glory may come in.” And when they marveled and said, “Who is this?” those who had already seen him testified a second time: “The Lord strong and mighty, he is the King of glory” (Ps 24:10 [23:10 LXX]).

The prophet David again indicates that Christ, having risen and ascended to the right hand of the Father, awaits the time appointed by the Father for the judgment, when all enemies will be subjected to him.

85. The prophet David again indicates that Christ, having risen and ascended to the right hand of the Father, awaits the time appointed by the Father for the judgment, when all enemies will be subjected to him. These enemies are all those who are found in rebellion against God—the angels, archangels, powers, and thrones, and those who have rejected the truth. As David says: “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool for your feet’” (Ps 110:1 [109:1 LXX]). And about the fact that he ascended to the place from which he had descended, David says, “His going forth is from the ends of heaven, and his destination is at the ends of heaven” (Ps 19:6 [18:7 LXX]). Then he refers to his judgment: “And there is no one who will be hidden from his heat” (Ps 19:6 [18:7 LXX]).

Discussion Questions



In some contexts today, followers of Christ are already very familiar with the suffering and death of Jesus for our salvation. How do people in your ministry circles typically talk or think about Jesus's suffering and death? In what ways do Old Testament passages shape their thinking about these things?



According to Irenaeus, what purposes of Jesus's suffering are foretold in the Old Testament? How do these passages describe the details of his physical suffering and opposition from the people around him?



Look up Isaiah 52:13–53:12 and try to read the passage with the goal of meeting Jesus. What images or truths stand out to you from this passage? What responses are stirred in your heart?



What are the implications of Christ's death and resurrection for our life in Christ and with other believers? What specific responses do you want to pursue this week?



In what ways could you help newer followers of Jesus understand the importance of the suffering and glory of Christ, including his ministry, suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and reign at the right hand of God? How could you help more seasoned believers capture a fresh vision of the importance of these events?



Chapter 8

The New Covenant Era and Final Recapitulation in Christ

In 1 Timothy 3:16, the apostle Paul summarizes the ministry of Jesus in this poetic way:

*He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.*

This brief, hymn-like contemplation of Christ celebrates many of the themes Irenaeus has covered throughout his book. But this chapter in particular explores the ministry of Jesus continued in the Spirit-inspired preaching of the apostles, echoing the fourth and fifth lines above. The apostles proclaim Christ throughout the world, and Gentiles who were formerly separated from God join his family. Belonging to a new family brings a new way of living. In the new covenant era, God's people fulfill the law

through loving God and their neighbors and live fruitful lives by the Spirit. They become part of a global body of believers who enjoy transformed lives and an intimate communion with God through the Son and by the Spirit. All of this is foretold by the Old Testament prophets through the Spirit.

Then, as a conclusion of the book, Irenaeus returns to some of his favorite themes. He affirms the guiding value of the rule of faith, with its three main articles of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the significance of the prophets speaking beforehand by the Holy Spirit about the plans of God, and God's success in recapitulating all things in the incarnational ministry of the Son. As you complete this final chapter, see if you can recall the ways Irenaeus has developed these themes throughout his work.*

86. Therefore, if the prophets prophesied that the Son of God was to be seen on the earth and prophesied also where on the earth and how and as what kind of man he would be seen, and if the Lord fulfilled all of these prophecies in his incarnation, then our faith in him is well founded, and the preaching in the tradition that has been handed down is true. This tradition refers to the testimony of the apostles who, sent by the Lord, preached throughout the world that the Son of God came to suffer, enduring suffering to destroy death and give life to the body. This was so that, by putting away our hostility toward God, which is sin, we would receive peace with him, doing what is pleasing to him.

And the prophets announced this in these words: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of peace, and of those who bring good news of good things" (Isa 52:7; Rom 10:15). And these



witnesses were designated to go out from Judea and Jerusalem to announce to us the word of God, which is also for us the law, as Isaiah says in this way: “For the law will go out from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isa 2:3). And David attests that these would be preached throughout the earth, when he says, “Their voice went out throughout the earth, and their words to the ends of the world” (Ps 19:4 [18:5 LXX]; Rom 10:18).

87. And it was indicated that people would be saved not by the wordiness of the law, but by the brevity of faith and love, as Isaiah says it: “He will complete and shorten his word in righteousness: for God will make a concise word in the whole world” (Isa 10:23 LXX; Rom 9:28). And this is why the apostle Paul says, “Love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom 13:10), for the one who loves God has fulfilled the law. But the Lord also, when he was asked what the first commandment was, said this: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your strength. And the second is like it: you shall love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets,” he says, “depend on these two commandments” (Matt 22:36–40). And so, through our faith in him he has increased our love for God and our neighbor, making us godly, righteous, and good. And in this way God has made “a concise word in the world.”
88. And Isaiah describes that after his ascension he would be exalted above all, and that no one would compare to him: “Who is the one who contends (with me)? Let them stand against me. And who is the one who is justified? Let them approach the Lord’s Son. Woe to you, for you will grow old like a garment, and the moth



will devour you” (Isa 50:8–9 LXX). And “every person will be humbled, and the Lord alone will be exalted in the highest” (Isa 2:17).

And Isaiah says that those who served God would be saved by his name, in the end: “And those who serve me will be called by a new name that will be blessed on the earth; and they will bless the true God” (Isa 65:15–16). And Isaiah declares that the Lord himself would bring about this blessing, and that he would redeem us by his own blood: “No mediator, no angel, but the Lord himself saved them, because he loves them and spared them: he himself redeemed them” (Isa 63:9 LXX).

89. And he did not want his redeemed people to return to the supervision of the law of Moses—for the law was fulfilled in Christ—but to be saved and made new by the Word, through faith in the Son of God and through love. For Isaiah says this: “Do not remember the former things, nor bring to mind old things. Look, I am doing a new thing that will now spring up, and you will know it. And I will make a way in the desert and rivers in the dry land, to give my chosen people something to drink, to my people, whom I have purchased to proclaim the magnificence of my character” (Isa 43:18–21). Now, the calling of the Gentiles was previously a “desert” and a “dry land,” since the Word had not passed among them nor given them the Holy Spirit to drink. And he prepared a new way of godliness and righteousness, and he has made the rivers flow in abundance by generously dispensing the Holy Spirit throughout the earth, just as he had promised through the prophets to pour out the Spirit on the face of the earth in the last days (Joel 2:28 [3:1 LXX]).





90. Therefore, our calling is lived in the newness of the Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter (Rom 7:6), as Jeremiah had prophesied: “Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I established with their fathers on the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, because they did not remain in my covenant, and I disregarded them,’ says the Lord. ‘But this is the covenant that I will establish with the house of Israel after those days,’ says the Lord: ‘I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they will be my people. And no longer will each person teach a neighbor, or each person his brother, saying, “Know the Lord,” for they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their iniquities and will remember their sins no more” (Jer 31:31–34 [38:31–34 LXX]).
91. And the Scriptures indicated that these promises would be inherited via the calling of the Gentiles, among whom the new covenant was opened up, as Isaiah says: “This is what the God of Israel says: ‘On that day people will trust in their Creator, and their eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel. And they will not trust in altars, nor in the works of their own hands, which their fingers have made” (Isa 17:6–8). For these things were said clearly about those who have turned away from idols and believe in God our Creator through “the Holy One of Israel.” And this Holy One of Israel is Christ, who became visible to humanity. And we eagerly look to him, not trusting in altars or in the works of our hands.



92. And it was foretold that he would become visible among us—for the Son of God became Son of Man—and be found by us, who did not know him before. This is what the Word himself says, in Isaiah: “I became visible to those who did not seek me; I was found by those who did not ask for me. I said, ‘Here I am,’ to a nation that did not call on my name” (Isa 65:1; Rom 10:20).

*For our hearts have been pulled away from stony worship,
and by faith we see God and become children
of Abraham, who was justified by faith.*

93. And it was announced in the Twelve Prophets by Hosea that this “nation”¹ would become a holy people: “I will call those who were not my people ‘my people,’ and I will call her who was not beloved, ‘beloved.’ And it will happen that in the place where it would have been said ‘not my people,’ there they will be called the sons of the Living God” (Hos 1:10 [2:1 LXX]; Hos 2:23 [2:25 LXX]; Rom 9:25–26). This is also what John the Baptist said: “For God is able to raise up children of Abraham from these stones” (Matt 3:9). For our hearts have been pulled away from stony worship, and by faith we see God and become children of Abraham, who was justified by faith. And this is why God says through Ezekiel the prophet, “And I will give them another heart, and I will put a new spirit in them; and I will pull away the stony heart from their body, and I will give them another heart, a heart of flesh, so that they will live by my ordinances and keep my commandments

1 This refers back to the “nation” mentioned in Isaiah 65:1, a nation representative of the Gentiles.

and do them. And they will be my people, and I will be their God” (Ezek 11:19–20).

94. Through the new calling, then, a change of heart takes place among the Gentiles, through the Word of God, when he became flesh and made his residence among humanity,² as also his disciple John says: “And his Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Therefore, the church bears more fruit, in the form of those who are saved, because it is no longer by a mediator, Moses, or a messenger, Elijah, but by the Lord himself that we are saved. He gives many more children to the church than to the synagogue of the past, as Isaiah announced: “Rejoice, O barren one, who did not give birth” (Isa 54:1; Gal 4:27). The barren one is the church, who in former times did not present any children at all to God. “Shout and cry out, you who are not in labor, for the desolate one now has more children than the woman who had a husband” (Isa 54:1; Gal 4:27). Now the former synagogue had a husband, and that husband was the law.
95. Moreover, Moses in Deuteronomy says that the Gentiles would be the “head” and the disobedient people the “tail” (Deut 28:44). And again he says, “You have made me jealous with what is not a god and provoked me with your idols: and I will make you jealous with what is not a nation and provoke you with a nation lacking understanding” (Deut 32:21; Rom 10:19). For they abandoned the God “who is” and served the gods “who are not,” and they killed the prophets of God and prophesied for Baal, the idol of the Canaanites. And

2 The wording of “made his residence among us” may recall the way God’s presence was experienced among the Israelites through the tabernacle.



they rejected the Son of God “who is,” and instead they chose Barabbas, a robber who had been caught in the act of murder. And they denied the eternal King and instead acknowledged a temporal Caesar as their king. For these reasons it pleased God to give his inheritance to “nations lacking understanding,” even to those who did not belong as citizens to God and did not know who God is (Eph 2:12).

Since, then, life has been given to us through this calling, and God has recapitulated the faith of Abraham in us, we should never turn back again, that is, to the former supervision of the law. For we have received the Lord of the law, the Son of God, and through faith in him we learn to love God with our whole heart and our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27). But the love of God is separated from all sin, and love for a neighbor “does no wrong to a neighbor” (Rom 13:10).

96. Therefore, we no longer need the law as a tutor (Gal 3:24). Indeed, we speak with the Father and stand in his presence, being “infants in evil” (1 Cor 14:20) and strengthened in righteousness and integrity. For the law will no longer say, “Do not commit adultery” (Exod 20:13) to the one who has no desire at all for another man’s wife. It will not say, “You shall not kill” (Exod 20:15) to those who rid themselves of all anger and enmity. Nor will it say, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s field or his ox or his donkey” (Exod 20:17) to those who have no care at all for earthly things but make heavenly investments. And it will not say, “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” (Exod 21:24) to those who do not regard anyone as their enemy but all as their neighbors instead, and for this reason cannot



even extend their hands for revenge. Nor will the law demand a tithe (Lev 27:30) from those who set apart all their possessions as belonging to God, who leave father and mother and all of their family members and follow the Word of God (Matt 19:29). And there will not be an obligation to rest for an entire day (Exod 20:8–9) for those who are perpetually observing the Sabbath, meaning those who are celebrating the worship of God in the temple of God that is their physical body (1 Cor 6:19), and who are engaged in righteous activity at all times. “For I desire mercy,” he says, “and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings” (Hos 6:6). But “the ungodly one who sacrifices a calf to me is like one who kills a dog; and the one who presents fine flour is like one who offers a pig’s blood” (Isa 66:3). But “whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Joel 2:32 [3:5 LXX]; Rom 10:13). And regarding the name of the Lord, “there is no other name given under heaven by which people are saved” (Acts 4:12), except for the name of God, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to whom even the demons are subjected, as well as evil spirits and any form of rebellion against God.

97. By calling on the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, a spirit of rebellion is cast out from humanity, and wherever any of those who believe in him call upon him and do his will, Christ is present, fulfilling the requests of those who call upon him with a pure heart. Since we have received salvation from him, we continually give thanks to God, who by his great and unfathomable wisdom not only saved us but also announced beforehand the salvation that would come from heaven. This salvation is the visible



coming of our Lord, that is, the course of his human existence. These are things that we cannot grasp on our own, for “the things that are impossible with humans are possible with God” (Luke 18:27).

This is why Jeremiah says this about such wisdom: “Who has gone up into heaven and taken her, and brought her down from the clouds? Who has crossed beyond the sea and found her, and will bring her back for the price of pure gold? There is no one who knows her way, nor any who thinks about her path. But he who knows all things knows her; he discovered her by his understanding. It is he who prepared the earth for all time and has filled it with livestock. It is he who sends out the light and it goes. He summoned it, and it obeyed him with fear. And the stars shone in their watches and rejoiced; he called them, and they said, ‘Here we are’; they shone with joy for him who made them. This is our God: no other can be compared to him. He has discovered the whole way by his understanding, and he has given it to his servant Jacob, and to Israel, his beloved. Afterward Wisdom appeared on the earth and lived together with humanity. This is the book of the commandments of God, and of the law that endures forever. All those who embrace Wisdom find life, but those who abandon her will die” (Bar 3:29–4:1).³ Now “Jacob” and “Israel” here refer to the Son of God, who received power from the Father over our lives, and after receiving it, he “brought it down” to us, who were far from it. He did this when he “appeared on the earth and lived together with humanity,” uniting and

3 The book of Baruch is found in the Septuagint* (LXX) and is part of a collection of works known as the Apocrypha. The book is named after Jeremiah's scribe, Baruch, and is thus closely linked with the book of Jeremiah (see Bar 1:1; Jer 36:4–10).



integrating the Spirit of God the Father with what God had formed, so that humanity would be “according to the image and likeness of God” (Gen 1:26).

98. This, dear friend, is the preaching of the truth, and this is the distinctive mark of our salvation, and this is the way of life, which the prophets announced and Christ confirmed and the apostles transmitted and the church all over the world is handing down to her children. This is the teaching that we must keep with the highest sense of responsibility, pleasing God with good works and sound judgment.

This, dear friend, is the preaching of the truth, and this is the distinctive mark of our salvation, and this is the way of life, which the prophets announced and Christ confirmed and the apostles transmitted and the church all over the world is handing down to her children.

99. And none should imagine that there is another God the Father apart from our Creator, as the heretics imagine. For they despise the God who is and make an idol of a god who is not, and they create for themselves a father that they think is much higher than our Creator, and they imagine that they have discovered something greater than the truth. For they are all godless people and blasphemers against their Creator and Father, as we have shown in the *Refutation and Overthrow of Falsely-Called Knowledge*.⁴ And still others despise the coming of the Son of God and the distinct plan of his incarnation, which the apostles handed down and

4 This work by Irenaeus is more commonly known as *Against Heresies*.



which the prophets foretold would be a recapitulation* of humanity, as we have demonstrated to you briefly. Such people too should be numbered among the unbelievers. And others do not receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit and reject for themselves the prophetic grace by which a person, when well-watered, bears the fruit of life for God. For Isaiah speaks of them in this way: “For they will be like an oak stripped of its leaves, and like a garden that has no water” (Isa 1:30). And such people are of no use to God, since they cannot bear any fruit.

100. So then, regarding the three main points of our profession of faith, error has led many to stray widely from the truth. For they either despise the Father, or they do not accept the Son by speaking against the distinct plan of his incarnation, or they do not accept the Spirit by despising prophecy. We must be wary of all such people and flee from their way of thinking if we truly want to please God and receive salvation from him.

Discussion Questions



The deeply Trinitarian approach of Irenaeus and other early Christian theologians stands in contrast to the treatment of God in many modern churches and ministries. Some followers of Christ today think of God as a generic higher power, and while they believe in Jesus and the Holy Spirit, they suspect that any deeper reflection on the Trinity would be dry and irrelevant. In what ways do you see this view of God among the people you minister to and with? How does this present both challenges and opportunities?



In your own words, how would you explain God's project of recapitulation* in relation to human history and the Son of God's ministry? What questions do you still have about this project?



How has your own view of God as Father, Son, and Spirit been enriched by Irenaeus's book? What specifically has made an impact in your thinking and affections?



As new covenant believers, we pursue loving God and loving others as the focal point of God's laws. In what practical ways can you express greater devotion to God this week? How can you love and serve your neighbors this week?



In what ways could you continue to explore the riches of the Trinity, whether through a renewed focus on reading the Bible from a Trinitarian perspective or through additional study of ancient and modern theology?



BIBLICAL STUDIES

Afterword





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Afterword

There are many undeveloped areas of land and trees in my small town in rural Indiana. I often see deer paths winding through the dense shrubbery of this land. The deer have forged these paths over time, and other deer now use these paths to move from place to place. Pastor-theologians from the early centuries of the church have shaped similar paths for us, helping us make our way through the dense and complex revelation and mysteries of the Trinity and salvation. They have asked and answered many of the same questions we ask today, leading us deeper and deeper into a knowledge and worship of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They have charted trails of exploration that we can follow deep into the woods of the glories of God. I hope you have enjoyed hiking over the path Irenaeus has cleared for us, a path that inspires and guides us to meet Jesus in the pages of Scripture.

Because Jesus is the centerpiece of salvation history, we can see evidence of his work throughout salvation history, through creation, the covenants, and promises of the kingdom. In *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* Irenaeus has given us just a sampling of the many passages in which the Spirit speaks prophetically about the preincarnate and incarnational ministry of the eternal Word of God, God the Son, Jesus Christ. From this book, which he calls a “summary commentary” (§1), Irenaeus presents readers with three invitations.

First, Irenaeus invites us to read both the Old and New Testament with a discerning eye for the presence and ministry of Jesus. This requires that we look at direct prophecies (e.g. Mic 5:2–4) that are fulfilled in specific ways in the birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. This discernment also includes identifying covenantal promises and blessings given to Noah’s sons, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to Moses and the people of Israel, and to King David and his descendants. Jesus delivers on these promises in his ministry. Reading the Bible to meet Jesus also extends to seeing types or patterns of Jesus in various Old Testament people, events, and institutions. We can even look for the appearances of the preincarnate Jesus to God’s people at key moments in Old Testament history, and we can listen in on conversations that Jesus has with God the Father in the Psalms and elsewhere.¹

1 For a thorough study of Irenaeus’s interpretation of the Old Testament, see Stephen O. Presley, “The *Demonstration* of Intertextuality in Irenaeus of Lyons,” in *Intertextuality in the Second Century*, ed. D. Jeffrey Bingham and Clayton N. Jefford (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 195–213.

As we read the Bible to meet Jesus, we meet Jesus within an overall story that fits together in intricate and substantive ways. We begin to see the details of Scripture within the larger shape of the story. This creates more of a sense of wonder about the unity in God's revelation of his ministry of salvation and restoration.

Second, Irenaeus opens a window to the riches of Jesus's ministry of recapitulation* that fulfills the eternal plans of God. This story of restoration is much more impressive than what any human author could create. The story of recapitulation* testifies to God's wisdom, power, goodness, and love. Recapitulation* is secured by a Savior who becomes fully human and reverses the failures of humanity's past, so that humanity could recover its original design and calling from creation (Gen 1:26–28; Ps 8; Heb 2:5–18). Recapitulation* means that death has been defeated by Jesus's death on the cross and his resurrection. Jesus's ministry of recapitulation* brings forgiveness, adoption into God's family, new life in the Spirit, and a renewed focus of loving God and loving others for those who are united with Christ by faith. Recapitulation* ultimately results in immortality, participation in the kingdom of heaven, and everlasting communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

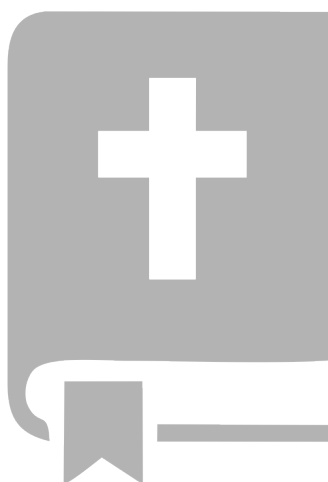
Third, Irenaeus summons us to engage with God as we engage with the Scriptures. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are central to Irenaeus's book, reflecting the priorities of his life and the object of his affections. Irenaeus reads Scripture to contemplate the glory of God and the wonderful ways he reveals himself throughout history. Irenaeus writes to strengthen the followers of Christ in his era, to help them grow in their knowledge and experience

of God in the midst of spiritual attacks, false teachings, and persecutions. Just like the second-century readers, we need examples of how to keep our focus on the Trinity when we read Scripture. The more we cultivate an alertness to God's glorious and loving plans, the authoritative and restorative ministry of Jesus, and the wise and nourishing presence of the Spirit when we read the Bible, the more we will experience the intended effects of studying Scripture. We will actually meet with Jesus and enter into the sweet communion with Father, Son, and Spirit that we were created to enjoy.

In case Irenaeus's own words have left you unsure of how to proceed, try reading the many passages that he directly quotes or summarizes. There are also larger sections of the New Testament—the passion accounts in the Gospels, many chapters in Romans, or even the entire book of Hebrews—that can inspire and teach us to interact with the Old Testament in ways that lead us to Christ. The Old Testament awaits our careful and prayerful study, so that we can appreciate both the significance of each passage in its original context and the greater story building momentum toward and preparing us for the climactic appearance of Christ. I have found that reading the Bible to meet Jesus brings encouragement, challenge, and a sense of wonder that grows over time and with practice!

Resources for Application





BIBLICAL STUDIES



Soul Work and Soul Care: Scripture Engagement and Catechesis

By Gregory S. MaGee

No one presumes to teach an art until he has first carefully studied it. Look how foolish it is for the inexperienced to assume pastoral authority, since the care of souls is the art of arts!

~ Gregory the Great, c. 590

Your leaders . . . keep watch over your souls and will give an account for their work.

~ Hebrews 13:17a

Each Sacred Roots Spiritual Classic has a “Soul Work and Soul Care” resource to illustrate how Christian leaders across cultures and generations have found a particular spiritual classic helpful in pastoral ministry. “Soul work” includes the *personal* work of watering, weeding, pruning, and fertilizing the garden of one’s own soul. In a similar way, “soul care” involves the *pastoral* work of nurturing growth in another’s friendship with God. When Jesus discusses soul work and soul care, he often uses metaphors from the medical and agricultural professions. Like a doctor for souls, or a farmer caring for an orchard of spiritual fruit trees, congregational leaders who hope to tend souls can learn much from the wisdom of those who have gone before us.

If Irenaeus’s brief book has begun to feed your soul and whet your appetite for more, here is how you can continue

to find nourishment for your own spiritual life and seek to bring spiritual sustenance to those under your care. The goal of soul work is to tend to your own heart and spiritual formation, while the goal of soul care is to guide others into “life to the full” with the Lord (John 10:10). You may recall that Irenaeus hoped his book would be beneficial to his friend Marcianus in both of these ways.

Especially in the individualistic cultures many of us live in, questions of identity and belonging become more and more pressing. People look for identity and meaning in anything from their political tribes to the generation they belong to. Christians have great resources to foster a healthy and authentic identity in Christ, but this identity formation does not happen automatically. Churches and the followers of Christ in them must pursue growth in identity formation with intentionality and perseverance. Our exploration of the teachings and theology of Irenaeus can offer us fresh ideas and renewed motivation for becoming more deeply rooted and established in Christ.

Engaging Scripture Like Irenaeus

For our own soul work, we need to evaluate the way Scripture contributes to the process of Christ being formed in us (Gal 4:19). Irenaeus loves talking about the Bible, and it is clear that Scripture has played a central role in his identity development. Growing deep roots in Christ begins with becoming increasingly familiar with the parts and whole of the Bible. God has revealed himself to us by speaking comprehensively and purposefully in Scripture. As a result, the details in every passage are worth pursuing, and the many intricate and profound connections across Scripture hold great potential for our spiritual growth.



Both the details and the connections support the one story that ultimately matters—the eternal story that God set in motion in human history and governed each step of the way. When our souls are fed regularly through quality interaction with Scripture, our thoughts become more saturated with the truths and themes of the story. We then recognize more of the value and purpose of our lives within this story.

As we enjoy the process of soaking in Scripture we simultaneously seek to tune our ears to hear Christ in the Bible, to contemplate the centrality of his ministry in the plans of God. The Scriptures, including the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, point to Jesus (Luke 24:44; John 5:39). Irenaeus shows us that we should appreciate Jesus within a fully Trinitarian perspective, noting the way the three persons of the Trinity exist as one in their eternal being and move in unity in their interventions in human history. This means that in addition to reading about the life and ministry of Jesus in the Gospels and the significance of his ministry in the rest of the New Testament, we need to spend time meeting Jesus as the Word who met and conversed with Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, David, and many others. We need to meet him in the prophetic witness of the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament prophets. As we practice reading the parts and whole of Scripture, we not only relate the parts to the whole, but we continually perceive the light and presence of the Father, Son, and Spirit in the parts and the whole.

There is no substitute for a regular and nutritious diet of Scripture in our Christian lives. God, by his Spirit, leads us to Christ and nourishes our souls through the words of Scripture. He carries out this soul work in the hearts and

lives of those who have an ongoing exposure to Scripture and its witness to Jesus Christ.

Retrieving Catechesis in the Local Church

The ancient Christian commitment to catechesis—the process of carefully and patiently teaching and training believers in the essential beliefs, virtues, and practices of the Christian faith—has its origins in New Testament passages such as Luke 1:4 and Galatians 6:6.¹ Many have even identified *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* as catechetical instruction, as indicated by Irenaeus’s goal of instructing others and his references to the rule of faith* and baptism (§§1–7). Catechesis has played a vital role in helping followers of Christ leave behind their old sources of identity and significance in order to adopt a fully new sense of self and communion with Christ and his family. Paul speaks about how the early Christians in Asia Minor had “learned Christ” in such a way that they put away former ways of life, were renewed completely in Christ, and put on their new selves in all areas of worship and life (Eph 4:20–24). This was a faithful extension of the mission Jesus entrusted to his disciples, when he told them, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19–20).

Early Christians such as Irenaeus carried out this catechesis from within a robust Trinitarian framework. They spent much time thinking and teaching about consequential

1 For further explanation of, and one model for, incorporating catechesis into a local church, see J. I. Packer and Gary A. Parrett, *Grounded in the Gospel: Building Believers the Old-Fashioned Way* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010).

theological topics related to the Father, Son, and Spirit. Theology was not seen as just a side hobby for a few in the church—it was the source of Christian growth and discipleship for all believers. Irenaeus himself talks about the necessity of Christian practice emerging from an orthodox faith (§2), and he shows us what it looks like to make the persons and works of the Trinity the focus of worship and the center of our faith and life.

When we provide soul care to others, we can commit to supporting biblical teaching and worship with the theological heritage of the church. We often teach biblically based lessons on practical areas of Christian living in our churches. These are important, but they only supply the “how” of the Christian life. The theological heritage of Christianity supplies the “who” and the “why” of the Christian life, directing us into fuller and truer worship of the One who gives our lives meaning and purpose, both now and for eternity.

The process of catechesis can be carried out in surprisingly straightforward ways. Instructing the flock can be integrated into existing church practices, such as baptism, communion, other ceremonies that mark important milestones, events drawn from the church calendar, worship through music, and preaching and teaching. Carrying out catechesis in the context of these corporate practices can help cultivate faith that is still truly personal but never independent and isolated from the shared legacy of biblical and orthodox Christianity.

Baptism: When your church celebrates baptisms, take the opportunity to teach about forgiveness, new and restored life, dying with Christ, rising with Christ, the gift of the



Spirit, and belonging to the body of Christ. Baptisms mark the beginning of one's life with Christ and participation in the church. New Testament passages such as Romans 6:4–6 can certainly illuminate these truths, but Old Testament images from Noah and the flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, or the cleansing described in Ezekiel 36:24–28 can also reinforce the powerful deliverance and change commemorated in baptism. Incorporating theologically substantive explanation of what baptism represents into the practice itself can strengthen all who experience or witness baptisms in their faith and understanding of God's saving work.

Communion (the Lord's Supper): Regular participation in communion places the spotlight on the sacrificial death of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins and our anticipation of the full arrival of God's kingdom when Christ returns (Matt 26:26–29). As with baptism, the practice itself brings blessing and contributes to spiritual formation. There is something powerful and moving about celebrating vibrant *koinonia* (relational partnership and intimate union) through communion, a *koinonia* that is experienced with God through Christ, but also with followers around the world and across history. But catechesis through additional explanation and teaching about communion can be quite fruitful. The practice can be contemplated from many different directions, whether from the words and events of the Last Supper, from Paul's explanations in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11, or from Jesus's stunning words about eating his flesh and drinking his blood in John 6:25–59. There are also many truths to examine from the events of Jesus's suffering and death and from the spiritual implications that are unfolded in both the Old and New Testament. One church I belonged to celebrated weekly communion,

and each week a different elder in the church guided the congregants through spiritual reflection on the significance of the practice. Over time this combination of practice and teaching impressed on us the meaning and value of Christ's bodily sacrifice, suffering, death for the forgiveness of sins and our participation in the divine life of God (2 Pet 1:4).

Weddings: According to Ephesians 5:22–33, Christian marriages fulfill God's design for creation and also signify the intimate union between Christ and his bride, the church. Thus, they turn our attention to the joyful outcome of God's redemptive ministry for us. Our pastor plumbed the depths of this revealed mystery when he led the wedding ceremony for my son and his wife a year ago. He explored passages from Genesis to Revelation, placing marriage and its representation of Christ and the church into the greater context of God's reclamation and restoration of humanity in Christ. The ceremony felt more like a worship service, with the theologically sensitive teaching on the Bible supplying the truths that nurtured our worship. While weddings also offer opportunities to give thanks for God's goodness to the couple and offer biblical wisdom for marriage, ministers can help further embed the magnificent work of Christ and the story of God into the hearts of the couple and other believers present at the ceremony.

Funerals: Few occasions bring together people who are open and receptive to spiritual truth like a funeral. Ministers who communicate and explain our resurrection hope provide priceless spiritual instruction and edification. Pastors who proclaim that since Jesus rose again, all those who are united in Christ will rise again when he returns are providing soul care to people who are pondering the brevity

of life and the pain and confusion of death. Even in the midst of great loss, attendees can find strength, understanding, and hope in the Lord, guided by the Spirit through the words of a minister. The Bible preaches a unique hope for followers of Christ who have died (1 Thess 4:13–18), and it proclaims a triumphant victory over the great enemy, death (Isa 26:19; Dan 12:2; John 5:24–29; 1 Cor 15:51–58).

The Church Calendar: The regular rhythms of the church calendar help turn our attention back to theologically momentous events on a yearly basis. During the Advent* season, the church resists the greed and instant gratification of our culture by embracing and proclaiming a shining light in a dark world. Practices such as lighting advent* candles and having congregants share about the ways they have witnessed God’s hope, peace, love, and joy in their lives can create a more purposeful and meaningful advent* season. Pastors and teachers can highlight the truth of Emmanuel, “God with us,” by teaching from Old Testament passages such as Isaiah 9:2–7, Daniel 7:13–14, and Micah 5:2–5. They can survey the involvement of major and minor characters in Matthew 1–2 and Luke 1–2 and delve into the theological meditation on the Word’s incarnation in John 1:1–18. Passages such as Titus 2:11–14, Hebrews 9:27–28, and 1 Peter 1:3–7 can direct us to the second advent* of Christ, so we can learn to pray “Our Lord, come!” (1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20), and “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:9–13). A focus on Jesus’s future advent* teaches us to groan with the rest of creation for the redemption of our bodies and the liberation and renewal of creation (Rom 8:18–25). Similar goals can be pursued during Holy Week and other seasons in the church calendar.

Worship through music: At each worship gathering, believers lift their voices to praise God using words that often have profound theological content. Worship leaders can choose hymns and songs that direct our wonder to the Trinity and the great events of salvation history. New Testament hymns and doxologies typically extol the wonders of God in Christ (Rom 11:33–36; Phil 2:5–11; Eph 5:14; Col 1:15–20; 1 Tim 1:17; 3:16; Jude 24–25; Rev 4–5), and the poetic nature of these passages help the words and truths sink into our minds and hearts. Similarly, the Psalms and other poetic material from the Old Testament have inspired the worship of followers of Christ since he appeared on earth (Matt 26:30; Eph 5:19). An important component of catechesis in the church is the frequent recitation of words of truth. This oral repetition helps form the souls and lives of those who sing the words of theologically rich hymns and songs. Carefully selected worship music can instill a stronger orientation to God and fuller sense of identity and belonging to his family among the people of God in our churches and ministries.

Preaching and teaching: Bible teaching can be infused with greater theological awareness. Irenaeus did this with the rule of faith,^{*} and now we have the creeds to help fill that role. I have observed that reciting the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed² on a regular basis helps imprint enduring truths and a deep affection for God in the minds and hearts of a congregation. The rhythms of the creeds sink into our thoughts and language, and the wording redirects us to the “first things” of our faith and worship. They

2 The Apostles' Creed dates to the late second century. The Nicene Creed was first articulated in AD 325, but its current form includes the expanded version affirmed in AD 381, at the Council of Constantinople.

turn our eyes to the wonders of our Triune God and the blessings of salvation and resurrected life that come from the Father, through the Son, and by the Holy Spirit. This theological center of gravity is so important for believers' formation in discipleship. To help church participants gain as much spiritual benefit as they can from reciting a creed, pastors and teachers might also give a series of lessons on the Apostles' Creed or Nicene Creed. I have been part of several churches who have done this, and I witnessed the constructive effects to my own faith and to the faith of others around me.

Conclusion

Irenaeus has been a trusted guide to redirect our attention to the possibilities of going “further up and further in” as we encounter Jesus through Scripture.³ There is no substitute for extensive, Trinitarian engagement with Scripture as an ingredient in our own soul work. And supplying intentional, regular theological instruction (catechesis) in the truths of Scripture and theology is a fundamental ingredient in our soul care for others.

The goal of this book has been to learn to read the Bible to meet Jesus. This is wonderful invitation and a great opportunity for growth and deeper intimacy with the Lord. But perhaps we need to back up a step and appreciate something that we might otherwise miss. This goal of meeting Jesus emerges from the reality that Jesus has already met us! Soul work and soul care both begin with the recognition and reception of the gracious and powerful ministry of God, through Christ, by the Spirit. The Scriptures we study for ourselves and the purposeful

3 Title of chapter 15, C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 161.



theological teaching we provide for others both testify to the stunning truth that Jesus meets us, in our world, to accomplish the eternal plans of God. Our lives will never be the same as a result!

The good news that Irenaeus presents and supports throughout his book is the account of an active God reaching out to humanity through Christ and by the Spirit. Irenaeus demonstrates from the Old Testament that the Word has entered the human story in many ways and has spoken by the Spirit through the prophets. Then, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, as the climactic chapter and turning point of the story! He became fully and truly human, rewriting and reclaiming our story through his bodily death and resurrection. Through Christ and by the Spirit we are restored and united to the Father so we can enjoy everlasting communion with our Triune God. I pray that this initial exposure to Irenaeus's *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* will ignite renewed motivation and new insights for both your soul work and soul care.

Continuing the Conversation

The following resources will help you continue to investigate Irenaeus's writings and the ideas they feature.

Irenaeus

Behr, John. *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Grant, Robert M. *Irenaeus of Lyons*. The Early Church Fathers. London: Routledge, 1997. This book includes Grant's translation of large portions of *Against Heresies*.

Mackenzie, Iain M. *Irenaeus's Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching: A Theological Commentary and Translation*. London: Routledge, 2018.

Osborn, Eric. *Irenaeus of Lyons*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Parvis, Sara, and Paul Foster, eds. *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012.

St. Irenaeus of Lyons: Against the Heresies, Books 1–3. Ancient Christian Writers Series 55, 64, 65. Translated by D. J. Unger, et al. New York: Paulist Press, 1992.

Biblical Theology

Dempster, Stephen G. *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*. New Studies in Biblical Theology. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003.

Bruce, F. F. *The New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968.

Goldsworthy, Graeme. *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1991.

The Gospel Project. Lifeway Christian Resources. This Sunday School Curriculum works through the Old and New Testaments in three-year cycles. The common theme is seeing the good news of Jesus each step along the way. The curriculum is different for adults, kids, and students.

Ward, Timothy. *Words of Life: Scripture as the Living and Active Word of God*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009.

Wright, Christopher J. H. *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014.

The Trinity and the Theological Heritage of Christianity

Kalantzis, George, and Andrew Tooley, eds. *Evangelicals and the Early Church: Recovery, Reform, and Renewal*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012. See especially the chapters in part two of the book.

McGrath, Alister. *The Christian Theology Reader*. 5th ed. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017. See especially Trinitarian and christological excerpts from early church theologians Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hilary of Poitiers, Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and Augustine.

Oden, Thomas C. *Classic Christianity: A Systematic Theology*. New York: HarperOne, 2009. This is a combined volume of Oden's earlier books *The Living God*, *The Word of Life*, and *Life in the Spirit*.

Packer, J. I. *Knowing God*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993.

Packer, J. I., and Thomas C. Oden. *One Faith: The Evangelical Consensus*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2004.

Reeves, Michael. *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012.

Sanders, Fred. *The Deep Things of God: How the Trinity Changes Everything*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010.

Sanders, Fred. *The Triune God*. New Studies in Dogmatics. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016.

Sanders, Fred, and Klaus Issler. *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2007.

Torrance, Thomas F. *Incarnation: The Person and Life of Christ*. Edited by Robert T. Walker. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2008.

Williams, D. H., ed. *Tradition, Scripture, and Interpretation: A Sourcebook of the Ancient Church*. Evangelical Ressourcement: Ancient Sources for the Church's Future. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006. This book consists of excerpts from early Christian theologians, including Irenaeus.



Glossary

Advent – A term which means “coming” and describes the eternal Son of God coming into our world. The first advent refers to Jesus’s earthly life and ministry in the first century, and the second advent refers to Jesus’s future glorious return to reclaim and restore all of creation.

Davidic Covenant – When Joseph blessed his sons, God indicated that one of Judah’s descendants would reign as God’s specially chosen king (Gen 49:8–12; see also Num 24:9, 14–19). God made a covenant with Judah’s descendant David, promising that the anticipated king would come from his family (2 Sam 7:5–16). Micah prophesied that this king would be born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2–4).

End Times – The final, decisive era of salvation history, beginning with Christ’s incarnational ministry as the fulfillment of God’s plans.

Gnostics – A religious group whose adherents in the second century sometimes tried to merge their non-Christian ideas with the teachings of Christianity.

Lyons – A city in modern-day France.

Marcionites – Followers of the teachings of Marcion, who grew up within the Christian tradition but whose ideas ultimately strayed from the teachings of the Bible. Both Marcionites and Gnostics denied Jesus’s full humanity and drove a wedge between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. Both groups tried

to appeal to specific biblical passages or concepts to support their ideas without properly understanding the passages within the complete biblical account of God's saving work throughout history.

Paradise – The garden of Eden.

Pascha – The term the early church used to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus. It is connected linguistically to the Hebrew term for Passover.

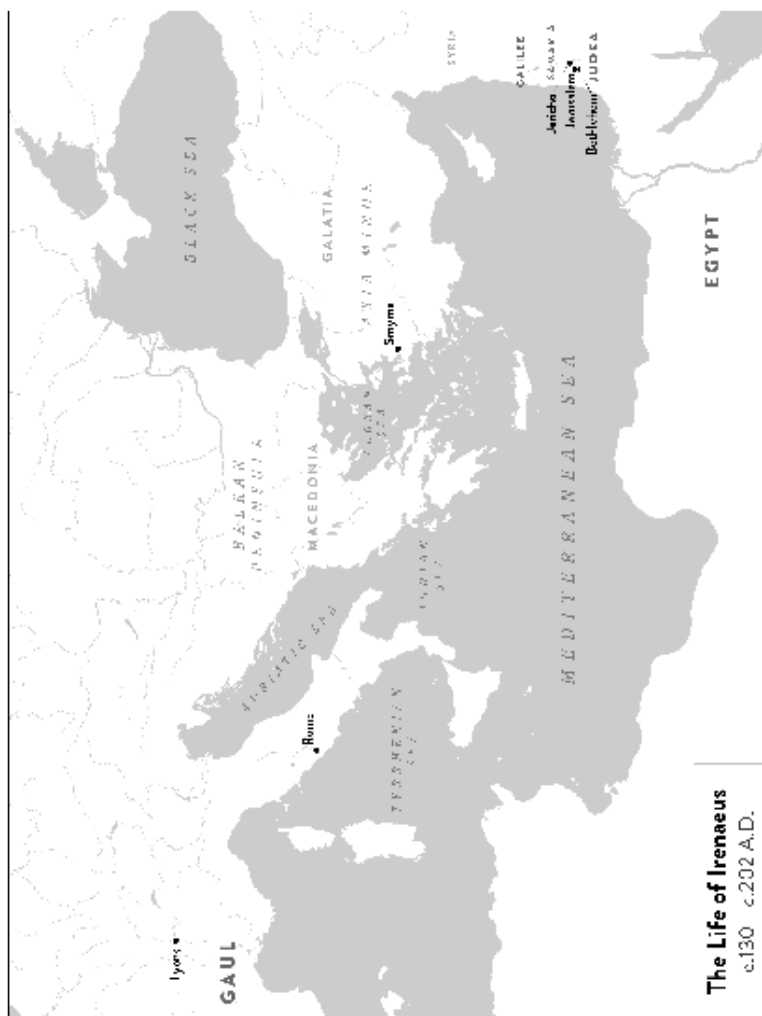
Recapitulation – A term referring to a fully human Christ repeating and rewriting human history in order to restore humanity to God. The term identifies both the end goal of God's saving plans and the process by which he carried out these plans in Christ. The idea of recapitulation has its origins in Ephesians 1:9–10, which describes God's plan to unite and restore (recapitulate) everything in heaven and earth in Christ as the crowning achievement of his eternal plans for this world.

Regula fide – A profession of convictions about the most central matters of Christian faith, truths related to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These convictions had been proclaimed in Christian worship and celebrated in Christian teaching from the beginning of the church's existence, so they were deeply imprinted into the thoughts and affections of the early followers of Christ. Irenaeus and other early Christian leaders articulated the rule of faith* in various ways, but they shared a common focus on the essence and works of the Trinity.

Septuagint – A Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was originally written almost entirely in Hebrew.

Shinar – Southern Mesopotamia.

Map of Important Places





A Letter to God's Friends and Fellow Warriors On Why We Read the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics Together

Dear Friends and Fellow Warriors,

Greetings in the strong name of Jesus! What a joy to know that Jesus calls us “Friend” (John 15). What an honor to stand with sisters and brothers from every century and culture to shout, “Worthy is the Lamb!” What a privilege to serve in the Lamb’s army, not fighting flesh and blood, but God’s *internal* (the flesh), *external* (the world), and *infernal* (the Devil) enemies. In light of this cosmic struggle, we put on a wartime (not peacetime) mindset as we follow Jesus. Moses stated that God is present and at work in every generation (Ps 90:1), and the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics are for those who desire to be used within their *oikos* sphere of influence like David was used by God in his generation (Ps 57:2; Acts 13:36).

Our Context: A Battle with God’s Internal, External, and Infernal Enemies

Scripture teaches our daily need to choose a missional mindset (Matt 6:10). God’s kingdom never advances in neutral territory. Every inch in creation, including each inch of our soul, is a contested battlefield. God’s enemies are threefold. First, there is an *internal* enemy hiding within the heart of each redeemed child of God. God loves us, even though we often battle a “Judas-heart”—a tendency to betray our Lord (John 12:6). Scripture names this brokenness the “flesh” (*sarx*), the “old man,” or the

“sin nature” (Rom 8; Gal 5–6). We work to kill (“mortify”) this sin lest it succeed in killing us (Rom 8:13).

Second, as followers of Jesus, we battle all *external* enemies opposing the Lamb’s kingdom. Sickened by sin, polluted by greed, corrupted by self-centeredness, idolatry, and oppression; our world is not the way it is supposed to be. What God created good has been twisted and now often grieves the Holy Spirit. We choose to stand with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in refusing to bow to the principalities and powers of the age (Dan 3) or to accept the besetting sins of our ethnicities, nations, and generations. Scripture and our sacred roots shine painful yet purifying light on our blind spots.

Finally, we are not ignorant of the Devil’s schemes. We may not know if a demon’s name is “Screwtape” or “Legion,” but we do know that an *infernal* enemy opposes God’s kingdom *shalom*. He is the devil, Satan, the Father of Lies, the Accuser, and one day soon he and his demons will be completely crushed. In this time between the times, the Lamb’s followers resist and renounce the devil and all his ways with the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.

Our Mission: To Be Faithful Stewards and Wise Servants in Our Generation

Scripture contains a number of “history” psalms (Pss 78, 105, 106, 136; Neh 9:6–38; Heb 11). These songs challenge us to reflect on women and men who chose to serve God in their generation—Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Phinehas, Rahab, David, Esther and many others. History psalms also warn of those who ignored or refused to participate in



God's work (Pharaoh, Dathan, Abiram, Og). Leaders like Rahab the prostitute (Matt 1:5; Heb 11:35; Jas 2:25) and King David were far from perfect (Ps 51). Yet Scripture declares that leaders like David "served the purposes of God in his own generation" (Acts 13:36).

Do you want God to use you in your generation? Are you willing to be a David or Esther today? God is already at work in our communities, schools, and workplaces. Sometimes the neighborhoods with the greatest challenges (those with giants like "Goliath" and armies of Philistine enemies) are the very places God finds servants and stewards he can use (1 Sam 17; 1 Cor 4:1).



Like King David, Prince Kaboo of the Kru people in Liberia chose to participate in God's work in his generation. As a child, Prince Kaboo (1873–1893) was taken hostage by a rival tribe and was about to be executed when he experienced a supernatural deliverance. After weeks of traveling through the jungle, Kaboo arrived at a mission station near Monrovia, Liberia's capital. There, as a fourteen-year-old teenager, he wholeheartedly gave his life to Jesus Christ.

Prince Kaboo took on the name Samuel Kaboo Morris at his baptism, and he spent the next four years working and studying Scripture—especially Jesus's teaching about

the Holy Spirit as recorded by his friend John (John 14–17). Kaboo was fascinated with the Holy Spirit, for he had personally experienced the Holy Spirit’s powerful deliverance. Eventually, the missionaries told Kaboo they had taught him all they knew and that if he wanted to learn more about the Holy Spirit, he would need to travel to the United States. Kaboo felt the need for more training about the Holy Spirit before being ready to return to the Kru as an evangelist. With no shoes or money, Kaboo walked to Monrovia’s harbor to find passage to New York—trusting his Father in heaven to provide.

Kaboo’s story is powerful. The ship that transported Kaboo experienced revival with the captain and many crew coming to Christ. Within a few hours of arriving in New York, Kaboo led seventeen men to Christ at an inner-city rescue mission. On his third day in the United States, the eighteen-year-old evangelist preached at a Sunday school meeting and revival broke out with a new missionary society organized that very day. God provided money for Kaboo’s college tuition, housing, books, and necessities. By the end of his first week in America, Kaboo had arrived in Fort Wayne, Indiana, to begin studying at Taylor University—an evangelical college committed to raising up workers for the harvest fields and who would walk in the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt 9:36; Acts 1:8).

Prince Kaboo’s arrival at Taylor University transformed not only Taylor University’s campus, but also the whole city of Fort Wayne. On his first Sunday in town, Kaboo walked to the front of the church and asked for permission to pray. As he prayed, the power and presence of the Holy Spirit

descended on the congregation in a way none had ever experienced before. The pastor reported, “what I said and what Sammy said I do not remember, but I know my soul was on fire as never before. . . . No such visitation of the Holy Spirit had ever been witnessed” by our congregation.¹



Two years later, on May 12, 1893, at the age of twenty, Prince Samuel Kaboo Morris died from an illness contracted after traveling through a snowstorm to preach. Since his death, Kaboo’s story has influenced thousands of students at Taylor University and elsewhere to participate with the Holy Spirit in mission and seek the Spirit’s power in witness. John Wengatz was a student at Taylor in 1906, the year he first read Kaboo’s story. Some fifty years later, after a lifetime invested as a missionary in Africa, Wengatz remarked “my tears never cease to flow as I read that unrepeatable story.”² Although Kaboo died at age twenty, he was used mightily by God in his generation. Will those who tell the story of your life say the same?

Our Vision: Toward Ten Thousand “Tozers”

If you are pursuing God with the same passion and hunger displayed by Samuel Kaboo Morris, then you will be glad to meet A. W. Tozer (1897–1963). Tozer grew up poor without the opportunity to complete high school. While

1 Lindley Baldwin, *Samuel Morris: The African Boy God Sent to Prepare an American University for Its Mission to the World* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1987), 59.

2 John Wengatz, *Sammy Morris: Spirit-Filled Life* (Upland, IN: Taylor University Press, 1954), Preface.

working in a tire factory he heard the good news about Jesus, repented, and believed. At nineteen, he began to preach, becoming one of the most influential pastors in his generation. His books *The Pursuit of God* and *The Knowledge of the Holy* have helped millions know and love the Triune God revealed in Scripture. When asked how he learned to read Scripture with such clarity and theological depth, Pastor Tozer would often point to his “friends” and “teachers.” These teachers were a list of some thirty-five Christian spiritual classics Tozer read and reread throughout his life. Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics (SRSC) are for those with a hunger for the Holy Spirit like Prince Kaboo and a desire to be used like Pastor Tozer.

Sacred Roots envisions ten thousand Christian leaders serving in challenging ministry contexts across North America engaging with spiritual classics in community by the year 2030. Will you join this growing community as we pursue God together by reading and discussing spiritual classics with gospel friends and kingdom coworkers (Matt 9:35)?

A larger dream also informs Sacred Roots—a dream that imagines a million Christian workers equipped to serve among the global poor (Matt 9:36–38). The Center for the Study of Global Christianity reports that in the middle of 2020 there are approximately two and a half billion people living in urban poverty.³ This number will increase to over four billion by the year 2050. Sacred Roots dreams of

3 For the most current statistics, see <https://gordonconwell.edu/center-for-global-christianity/resources/status-of-global-christianity/>.

equipping one million Christian leaders among this great multitude—women and men like Prince Kaboo—with access to excellent editions of some of the greatest spiritual classics the Christian tradition has produced. Ultimately, the goal is increased faithfulness as leaders mature in representing Christ in local churches that are centered on Scripture, grounded in Great Tradition truth (Nicene), and engaged in contextually relevant witness to Christ’s love in thousands of diverse contexts.⁴

Our Strategy:

Scripture, Friendship, and Spiritual Classics

Sacred Roots’s strategy is simple. We believe fresh readings of Christian spiritual classics can lead Christian leaders into a deeper engagement with the God revealed in Scripture and into deeper friendships with one another.

Christian spiritual classics strengthen and deepen our roots in Scripture and help us produce the Spirit’s fruit. One day Jesus asked a serious student of the Bible a simple question, “*How do you read it?*” (Luke 10:26). Of the more than three hundred questions asked by Jesus in the Gospels, few are more relevant today. Faithfulness in our generation demands that we learn to read Scripture in a way consistent with the foundational truths held by followers of Jesus in every culture since the first century. We read Christian spiritual classics to discover faithful and fruitful readings of Scripture. As Dr. Don Davis has noted,

4 Don Davis, *Sacred Roots: A Primer on Retrieving the Great Tradition* (Wichita, KS: The Urban Ministry Institute, 2010), 35–45.

the church's "Great Tradition" perennially opens our eyes to new riches in Scripture's "Authoritative Tradition."⁵

A truth believed by all Christians, in all places, and at all times is that there is one God who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. From "before to beyond time," an eternal friendship between the Trinity's three persons has existed at the center of reality. Spiritual friendship provides the start and heart of truth. Just as spiritual classics can reveal new riches from Scripture, so they can help us grow in love for God and neighbors. They can provide practical help in deepening our friendships with the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit and with other believers—both with believers in this generation and with those surrounding us in the great cloud of witnesses (Heb 12:1; 13:7). Why do Christian leaders desperately need to pursue strong friendships? Start with these three reasons.

1. First, each of us has eyes far too small to see what God wants to show us! No one can begin to grasp the great things God is doing across 100 billion galaxies and throughout the many generations since the universe's creation. Friends, standing in different places, provide additional eyes to see from different perspectives what God is doing in the world and across history.
2. Second, each of us battles a sinful nature that distorts our perception of the truth. We need friends who speak truth to us, sharpening us like iron sharpening iron (Prov 27:17).

5 Ibid.

3. Third, all of us view creation through a particular culture's time and place. Each culture exists with a unique version of virtue and vice. Friends who speak to us from other cultures and centuries often affirm virtues in our culture, but they can also reflect ways our culture's vice habitually offends against kingdom *shalom*.

In sum, Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics help us grow in our friendship with God and neighbor (Matt 22:37–40). Neighbors include the living Christian leaders with whom we read and discuss this spiritual classic. However, “neighbor” also includes the author(s) of this spiritual classic. These women and men walked faithfully with God and neighbor. Their life and teachings produced good fruit in their generation and then continued to do so in the lives of other Christian leaders—often across many cultures and centuries. As an editorial team, we can personally testify to the fruitfulness of the time we have spent with our “friends,” the “ancient witnesses” in the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics. If you choose to invest in careful conversation with these saints of old (Heb 13:7), we are confident you will not only experience practical fruit in the present, but you will also gain new friends for eternity.

Tactical Notes: Christian Leaders Are Christian Readers

Throughout church history, fruitful Christian leaders have been intentional readers. Augustine (d. 430), a pastor and bishop in Africa, was challenged to a new level of ministry by reading a spiritual biography about

an Egyptian Christian leader named Anthony (d. 356).⁶ Protestant leaders like Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, Elizabeth Fry, Phoebe Palmer, and many others all published editions of spiritual classics for Christian leaders in their generation. Charles Harrison Mason (d. 1961), founder of the Church of God in Christ, was called to ministry through a reading of the autobiography of missionary and evangelist Amanda Smith.⁷ More recently, leaders like C. S. Lewis, A. W. Tozer, James Houston, and Rick Warren have encouraged Christian leaders to read wisely, especially choosing Christian spiritual classics.⁸

How to Read the Text

Plan your reading. Reading a spiritual classic is a bit like reading your Bible. You can read it anywhere or anytime, but there are times and places that will position you to better receive insight and truth. SRSC readers tend to read each spiritual classic several times, and many will “read” it both in written and audiobook versions. We read to hear what the original author of the text is saying and to understand what the Holy Spirit might be directing our attention to hear or reflect upon. On your day of rest (Sabbath), reserve some time to read or at least set aside some time to plan

6 Athanasius of Alexandria, *Renewal in Christ: Athanasius on the Christian Life*, ed. Jeremy Treat, Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics 6 (Upland, IN: Samuel Morris Publications, 2025).

7 Amanda Smith, *An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord's Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith, the Colored Evangelist; Containing an Account of Her Life Work of Faith, and Her Travels in America, England, Ireland, Scotland, India, and Africa, as an Independent Missionary* (Chicago: Meyer, 1893).

8 Explore the essays in Jamin Goggin and Kyle Strobel, eds., *Reading the Christian Spiritual Classics: A Guide for Evangelicals* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013).

when you will read from your spiritual classic that week. If you have a daily commute, perhaps use some of the time to listen and reflect on an audible version of the SRSC.

Work your reading plan. Once you have planned to read your spiritual classic, begin with the Introduction. The Introduction is written by a contemporary friend with significant ministry experience. This friend has spent much time reading and getting to know the spiritual classic and the author who wrote it. Often, the introduction is written by someone who has read the spiritual classic dozens, if not hundreds of times. The introduction will help you get the most out of your first several readings of the text.

After reading the Introduction, notice that all Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics are divided into eight chapters. These chapters are not always of equal length, but they all are weighty enough to engage your head, heart, and hands as well as your habitat and habits. Following the eight chapters, every SRSC includes a short section called Continuing the Conversation. If you enjoyed reading the spiritual classic, then Continuing the Conversation will help you discover more resources to engage the author(s) of the spiritual classic.

The Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics are divided into ten parts to make it easier to talk about the text with friends and coworkers. The table below provides four examples of how to read a SRSC with a group of friends. When friends commit to read and discuss a SRSC together, the group is called a Sacred Roots study group.⁹

9 To start a Sacred Roots study group, visit <https://www.sacredrootsministry.org/>.

| SRSC Section to Read | “Sunday School” Class | “Church-Based Seminary” Module | Monthly Pastor’s Meeting | Quarterly Retreat Discussion Group |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| | Ten Weeks | Eight Weeks | Monthly | Quarterly |
| Introduction | Week 1 | Week 1 | Month 1 | Read text before retreat and then discuss |
| Ch. 1 | Week 2 | | | |
| Ch. 2 | Week 3 | | | |
| Ch. 3 | Week 4 | Week 2 | Month 2 | |
| Ch. 4 | Week 5 | Week 3 | | |
| Ch. 5 | Week 6 | Week 4 | | |
| Ch. 6 | Week 7 | Week 5 | | |
| Ch. 7 | Week 8 | Week 6 | Month 3 | |
| Ch. 8 | Week 9 | Week 7 | | |
| Continuing the Conversation | Week 10 | | | |

Review your reading. The best readers, like the best leaders, do more than make a plan and work it. They also pause to take time to review their work—or in this case—their reading.¹⁰ Robert Clinton has noted that only around

10 The PWR (Plan, Work, Review) process is explained further by Don Allsman, *The Heroic Venture: A Parable of Project Leadership* (Wichita, KS: The Urban Ministry Institute, 2006).

25 percent of leaders in the Bible finished well.¹¹ If we hope to finish well in our generation we must learn to *attend* to our habitat, our head, our heart, our hands, and our habits. To *attend* means to pay attention, to apply our self, to prioritize and to value something enough to give it our time and our energy. Each chapter concludes with five types of questions aimed at helping you review your progress toward finishing well and hearing Jesus say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt 25:23).



Habitat? Habitat questions ask us to pause and look around at our environment, our culture, our generation, our nationality, and the things that make up the *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the times).

Questions may ask about the author’s habitat or our own. Since the SRSC were written across many centuries and cultures, they often help us notice aspects of our culture needing attention.



Head? Auguste Rodin’s sculpture known as *The Thinker* sits before an 18-foot-tall sculpture called *The Gates of Hell*. The massive sculptural group reflects Rodin’s engagement with a

spiritual classic by Dante, *The Divine Comedy*. Head questions require serious intellectual engagement as you talk with friends about the author’s ideas, claims, and proposals.



Heart? In August of 1541, John Calvin wrote a letter to a friend with this promise: “When I remember that I am not my own, I offer up my heart presented as a sacrifice to God.” Calvin’s

personal seal expressed this sincere desire. God not only

11 Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development*, Rev. ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 185–87.

owns our mind, but also our will and emotions. Heart questions will help you attend to the people and things to which you give your loves.



Hands? Albrecht Dürer sketched a drawing called *Study of the Hands of an Apostle* in the year 1508. The apostles were men of action, yet Dürer portrays the apostle's hands in prayer. The action to which SRSC call us are often surprising. Hands questions will challenge you to evaluate carefully what action you are to take after a particular reading.



Habits? Charlotte Mason (d. 1923) was a master teacher. She believed Christian formation must carefully attend to habit formation. Like laying railroad tracks, habit formation is hard work. But once laid, great work requires little effort just as railroad cars run smoothly on tracks. Habits questions challenge you to reflect on small daily or weekly actions that form your character and the character of those around you.

Reading with Friends

The Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics are not meant to be read alone; indeed, it is impossible to do so. Every time we open a SRSC we read a book that *has been read* by thousands of Christian leaders in previous generations, *is being read* by thousands of Christian leaders in our generation, and *will be read* (if the return of Christ tarries) by thousands of Christian leaders in generations after us. The readers before us have already finished their race. These thousands of Christian leaders read the text in hundreds of different cultures and across dozens of different generations. All these “friends” read this text with you now. As you read the SRSC, imagine

yourself talking about *The Rule of Benedict* (SRSC 2) with the reformer Martin Luther; or picture yourself discussing Madam Guyon's *A Short and Easy Method of Prayer* with the missionary Amy Carmichael. Remember you never read a Sacred Roots Spiritual Classic alone.

However, it is not just leaders who have gone before, it is also leaders in the present with whom you must imagine reading this SRSC. Whatever benefit you find in reading will be doubled when you share it with a friend. Whatever trouble or difficulty you find in reading the text will be halved when you share it with a friend. Resolve to never read a Sacred Roots Spiritual Classic alone.

Perhaps you have noticed that the word “generation” has already appeared in this preface more than fifteen times? The Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics represent the work of many generations working together. Five generations of evangelicals have worked and prayed together on this project since its public commencement in 2018. But these five generations of evangelicals represent only a small sample of the many generations who have tested the faithfulness and fruitfulness of the SRSC. Why does this matter? In part, it matters because these texts are treasures to use and then pass on to the next generation of leaders. Recognize the emerging leaders God has called you to serve and steward—share the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics with them.

Careful readers of Scripture know that the most influential leaders among God's people have always worked in teams. King David's teams became legends—“the three,” “the thirty.” The list of Paul's missionary and ministry team members whose first name we know from the New

Testament runs to nearly one hundred. Our Sacred Roots team of teams prays that this text will be a blessing and a reliable resource for you and your gospel friends as you pursue kingdom business together.

Grace and Peace,

Don, Uche, Greg, May, Ryan, Isaiah, and Hank



The Nicene Creed with Scriptural Support

The Urban Ministry Institute

We believe in one God,

Deut 6:4–5; Mark 12:29; 1 Cor 8:6

the Father Almighty,

Gen 17:1; Dan 4:35; Matt 6:9; Eph 4:6; Rev 1:8

Maker of heaven and earth

Gen 1:1; Isa 40:28; Rev 10:6

and of all things visible and invisible.

Ps 148; Rom 11:36; Rev 4:11

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God, begotten not created, of the same essence as the Father,

John 1:1–2; 3:18; 8:58; 14:9–10; 20:28; Col 1:15, 17; Heb 1:3–6

through whom all things were made.

John 1:3; Col 1:16

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became human.

Matt 1:20–23; Luke 19:10; John 1:14; 6:38

Who for us too, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried.

Matt 27:1–2; Mark 15:24–39, 43–47; Acts 13:29; Rom 5:8; Heb 2:10; 13:12

The third day he rose again according to the Scriptures,

Mark 16:5–7; Luke 24:6–8; Acts 1:3; Rom 6:9; 10:9; 2 Tim 2:8

ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

Mark 16:19; Eph 1:19–20

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his Kingdom will have no end.

Isa 9:7; Matt 24:30; John 5:22; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Rom 14:9; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver,

Gen 1:1–2; Job 33:4; Pss 104:30; 139:7–8; Luke 4:18–19; John 3:5–6; Acts 1:1–2; 1 Cor 2:11; Rev 3:22

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,

John 14:16–18, 26; 15:26; 20:22

who together with the Father and Son is worshiped and glorified,

Isa 6:3; Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14; Rev 4:8

who spoke by the prophets.

Num 11:29; Mic 3:8; Acts 2:17–18; 2 Pet 1:21

We believe in one holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 1:2; 10:17; Eph 5:25–28; 1 Tim 3:15; Rev 7:9

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sin,

Acts 22:16; Eph 4:4–5; 1 Pet 3:21

And we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come.

Isa 11:6–10; Mic 4:1–7; Luke 18:29–30; Rev 21:1–5; 21:22–22:5

Amen.

Memory Verses

Below are suggested memory verses, one for each section of the Creed.

The Father

Rev 4:11 — Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.

The Son

John 1:1 — In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The Son's Mission

1 Cor 15:3–5 — For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.

The Holy Spirit

Rom 8:11 — If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

The Church

1 Pet 2:9 — But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Our Hope

1 Thess 4:16–17 — For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.



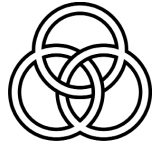
From Before to Beyond Time: The Plan of God and Human History

Adapted from Suzanne de Dietrich. *God's Unfolding Purpose*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976.

I. Before Time (Eternity Past)

1 Cor 2:7 – But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory (cf. Titus 1:2).

- A. The Eternal Triune God
- B. God's Eternal Purpose
- C. The Mystery of Iniquity
- D. The Principalities and Powers



II. Beginning of Time (Creation and Fall)

Gen 1:1 – In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

- A. Creative Word
- B. Humanity
- C. Fall
- D. Reign of Death and First Signs of Grace



III. Unfolding of Time (God's Plan Revealed through Israel)

Gal 3:8 – 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" (cf. Rom 9:4–5).

- A. Promise (Patriarchs)
- B. Exodus and Covenant at Sinai
- C. Promised Land
- D. The City, the Temple, and the Throne
(Prophet, Priest, and King)
- E. Exile
- F. Remnant



IV. Fullness of Time (Incarnation of the Messiah)

Gal 4:4–5 – But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

- A. The King Comes to His Kingdom
- B. The Present Reality of His Reign
- C. The Secret of the Kingdom:
the Already and the Not Yet
- D. The Crucified King
- E. The Risen Lord



V. The Last Times (The Descent of the Holy Spirit)

Acts 2:16–18 – But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: “And in the last days it shall be,” God declares, “that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.”

- A. Between the Times: the Church as
Foretaste of the Kingdom
- B. The Church as Agent of the Kingdom
- C. The Conflict Between the Kingdoms
of Darkness and Light



VI. The Fulfillment of Time (The Second Coming)

Matt 13:40–43 – Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all lawbreakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

- A. The Return of Christ
- B. Judgment
- C. The Consummation of His Kingdom





VII. Beyond Time (Eternity Future)

1 Cor 15:24–28 – Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

- A. Kingdom Handed Over
to God the Father
- B. God as All in All



About the Sacred Roots Project

Sacred Roots seeks to equip and empower under-resourced congregational leaders in urban, rural, and incarcerated communities. One avenue for accomplishing this goal is the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics, a series of abridged Christian spiritual classics that equip congregational leaders to engage the wealth of the Great Tradition.

The Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics include:

Praying the Psalms with Augustine and Friends

Edited by Carmen Joy Imes

Becoming a Community of Disciples:

Guidelines from Abbot Benedict and Bishop Basil

Benedict of Nursia and Basil of Caesarea, edited by
Greg Peters

Spiritual Friendship:

Learning How to Be Friends with God and One Another

Aelred of Rievaulx, edited by Hank Voss

Christian Mission and Poverty:

Wisdom from 2,000 Years of Church Leaders

Edited by Andrew T. Draper

Books Jesus Read: Learning from the Apocrypha

Edited by Robert F. Lay

Renewal in Christ: Athanasius on the Christian Life

Athanasius of Alexandria, edited by Jeremy Treat

First Christian Voices: Practices of the Apostolic Fathers

Edited by Michael Cooper



Las Casas on Faithful Witness

Bartolomé de las Casas, edited by Robert Chao Romero and Marcos Canales

Reading the Bible Spiritually:

Guidance from Guigo II, Reformers, and Puritans

Edited by Greg Peters

The Pursuit of God

A. W. Tozer, edited by Glen G. Scorgie

Pulpit Spirituality:

Jonathan Edwards on Soul Work and Soul Care

Jonathan Edwards, edited by Kyle Strobel and Kenneth P. Minkema

Mission with Prophetic Power:

The Journal of John Woolman

John Woolman, edited by Evan B. Howard

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Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching

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John Owen and Phoebe Palmer, edited by Daniel Hill

The Interior Castle:

Learning to Pray with Teresa of Ávila

Teresa of Ávila, edited by Nancy Reyes Frazier

God Is Faithful Still:

The Autobiography of George Müller

George Müller, edited by Uche Anizor

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The Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics are dedicated to all Christian leaders who have loved the poor and recognized the importance of Christian spiritual classics for nurturing the next generation. We especially recognize these fourteen:

John Wesley (1703–1791)

Rebecca Protten (1718–1780)

Elizabeth Fry (1780–1845)

Phoebe Palmer (1807–1874)

Dora Yu (1873–1931)

A. W. Tozer (1897–1963)



Howard Thurman (1899–1981)

Watchman Nee (1903–1972)

James Houston (1922–)

J. I. Packer (1926–2020)

Tom Oden (1931–2016)

René Padilla (1932–2021)

Dallas Willard (1935–2013)

Bruce Demarest (1935–2021)

Remember your leaders,
those who spoke to you the word of God.
Consider the outcome of their way of life,
and imitate their faith.

~ Hebrews 13:7



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"Greg MaGee's refresh of Irenaeus of Lyons's *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* invites readers to be tutored in the rule of faith by a church father too often neglected by evangelicals. MaGee's inviting paraphrase, along with his introductory notes and insightful footnotes, helps us learn from a man who seeks Jesus in all the Bible—and who witnesses him in his Trinitarian majesty more than a century before such Trinitarian champions as Athanasius, the Cappadocian Fathers, Hilary, or Augustine! Along the way, MaGee has added section titles to the ancient, numbered paragraphs and for each chapter offers questions which help the reader hear Irenaeus with fidelity and insight. This book is a call to see, know, and delight in Christ from two men who love him well."

~ **Richard A. Shenk, PhD,**

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