



Bible 101 - The Story of the Bible

Susie DiRosa – July 2, 2023

The story of the Bible, from the table of content to the maps in the back, is that of redemption.

Redemption: the action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil.

A two-sentence summary of the Bible: God creates the world and humanity breaks it. God initiates a plan to fix what humanity broke, and despite themselves, allows humanity to be part of the solution.

In the beginning...

In the beginning of the story, God creates the world and everything in it. He creates humanity and places the first people, Adam and Eve, in a wonderful garden where they enjoy a special and intimate relationship with Him.

Only with humanity do we see God interacting with creation.

Genesis 1:27-28 God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Two important takeaways:

- Humanity was created in the image of God.
- They were to rule over creation.

Our understanding of what it means to be made in the image of God is crucial to our understanding of the rest of the story. The Hebrew word for image that is used here is frequently used of statues, model, or replicas. Just as powerful earthly kings, to indicate their claim to dominion, set-up an image of themselves in the provinces of their empire where they do not personally appear, so man is placed upon earth in God's image as God's sovereign emblem.

To make it simple, to be human is to have the calling of representing God on the earth. And as God's royal stewards, who have been given dominion over creation, we are to develop the hidden potentials in God's creation so that the whole of it may celebrate His glory!

The Fall

This special relationship between God and humanity is tested right away though by a clever serpent, who, **by half-truths and lies**, convinces Eve to eat from the one tree they had been forbidden to eat from, the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Why was this tree forbidden to Adam and Eve?

-It represented divine knowledge, or the ability to decide what was good or bad. Even though we were made in His image, we were not supposed to carry the weight of being in the ultimate seat of judgement.

In their choice to not obey what God had directed them, sin entered the world with disastrous and deadly consequences:

- pain
- suffering
- death
- separation from God

The perfect world was broken. No longer could Adam and Eve remain in the garden, in the presence of God. Their sin created a separation between God and humanity.

Yet despite their disobedience, God provides a glimpse of hope by promising a future redemption through the offspring of the woman, who will one day crush the serpent's head, restoring harmony between humanity and God.

When the gates of Eden close behind Adam and Eve, they do not cease to be what God has created. The effect of the fall on all of us is not that we stop being humans—we remain in the image of God. But our rebellion has deeply affected **how we are humans**.

Image Bearers Take 2 - Abraham

God does not give up on humanity and their special calling to be His image bearers.

Genesis 12:2-3 "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Some form of the word **ble^ss** is used five times in this passage, and this is a very significant term in the first chapters of Genesis.

The dynamic word **ble^ss** expresses *God's purpose to give his creatures all they need to fulfill their lives in his creation as He intends for them.*

The word *curse*, by contrast, expresses God's awful judgment on his creatures when they rebel against his purposes for them.

God promises:

- (1) to make Abraham into a great nation
- (2) to bless him
- (3) to make his name great
- (4) to make him a blessing
- (5) to bless those who bless him and curse (or judge) those who judge him
- (6) ultimately to bless all peoples on earth through him

All that God tells Abram to do in return: go and be a blessing. Abram is obedient and goes to where God shows him, but as we read Abram's story we see God's faithfulness and continual pursuit of him, in spite of some of his choices.

Genesis 17:1-8 "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."

This kind of agreement is called a **covenant**: an agreement enacted between two parties in which one or both make promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance. A covenant was much like a contract. God is making a formal agreement with Abram, now called Abraham, and it is building from the first set of promises.

God now adds the instruction to Abraham to walk before Him faithfully and be blameless.

- From being the father of a great nation to the father of many nations.
- From making his name great to kings will come from him.
- This covenant will be between not just Abraham but all his descendants.
- He promises him land.

God concludes this covenant with the phrase, "and I will be their God." **He was the only God they needed.**

Three things we can take away from this part of the story:

1. God is Almighty.
2. He is all we need.
3. He is the source of all blessing.

Once again, God is extending a very special relationship to humanity. Through Abraham, God's plan of redemption is moving forward.

Exodus 1:6-7 "Now Joseph (that is Abraham's great-grandson) and all his brothers (he had 11) and all that generation died, but the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them."

Moses was a man who was born an Israelite but raised in Pharaoh's household. God speaks to him and tells him He has seen Israel's suffering and He has come down to rescue them. He is to bring them into the land that was promised to their ancestor Abraham.

Exodus 3:10 "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

Moses, just like Abraham, is being told by God to go and be a blessing.

The great Exodus begins! There were about 600,000 men, in addition to women and children.

Through Moses' leadership, God leads them to Mount Sinai. It is at the foot of this mountain that the next step in God's plan of redemption is reveal.

Exodus 19:3-9 "Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites. So, Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the Lord had commanded him to speak. The people all responded together, "We will do everything the Lord has said." So, Moses brought their answer back to the Lord."

By entering this covenant with God, they are saying to Him, "**Yes, make us into who you say we are.**" With each covenant, God gets more specific about His plan of redemption. The descendants of Abraham are not only now formed into a nation, but out of all the nations, they will be the treasured possession of God Almighty. They will be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.

By being faithful and obeying the covenant with all its laws, God will bring them life, prosperity, and blessing. But if they have unbelief and disobey, it will bring death, destruction and curse on them.

God then instructs Moses to gather from among the Israelites the materials required to build a huge tent that will become God's personal residence among his covenant people.

Exodus 29:45-46 "Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God."

Not since the garden of Eden has God dwelt amongst His people. God's redemption plan was moving forward! Israel eventually makes it to the land that God had promised them. And life moves forward.

Enter King David. God establishes another covenant and moves His plan of redemption further down the road.

2 Samuel 7 "This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed...I will also give you rest from all your enemies. 'The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him...But my love will never be taken away from him...Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."

With the covenant of David and the promise of an eternal throne, we get a glimpse of what God's completed plan to redeem the whole world looks like. It will be final and eternal. It will be complete and never to be undone. So, Israel waits for the One who is to come and establish this eternal throne, the Messiah.

This is the exodus. This is the single most important event in all Israelite history. **Without the exodus**, the children of Abraham were a forgotten race. **Without the exodus**, the promises of Abraham were nothing. **Without the exodus**, there would be no Mosaic covenant and no Israel. "I am Yahweh, your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." You would be hard-pressed to read far in the Old Testament without bumping into this phrase or allusions to it, because...this is **why** Israel should serve Yahweh.

-Dr. Sandy Richter

Jesus

Luke 1:30-35 "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

Here He is!! The one Israel had been longing for, the one who will sit on the throne of David and usher in this eternal kingdom! The Messiah has arrived!

With the birth of Jesus, all of Israel's longings and hopes find their fulfillment. Yet, the Israelites had a hard time recognizing what God **was** doing because they had their own ideas of what God **should** be doing.

-Jesus was born in a barn, *there was nothing kingly about that.*

-He didn't try to overthrow the government, *there was nothing kingly about that.*

-He didn't try to destroy all of Israel's enemies, *there was nothing kingly in that.*

If anything, He was being anti-kingly in their eyes.

If the king was supposed to help Israel be covenant faithful, why was he pushing the boundaries of the law so much? Why was he associating with those outside of the Jewish people? He was not shaping up to be the king they were hoping for.

He is the One that was promised to come and He made His kingly mission very clear from the beginning.

Luke 4:16-21 "On the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

They do not believe Jesus is who He says He is and they do what they do with all false Messiahs, they want to kill Him. But Jesus just walks right through the crowd and goes on His way. He was on mission to do the work of the Kingdom.

For three years Jesus travels around telling people that the Kingdom of God has arrived:

- calling people to repentance
- forgiving people of their sins
- performing miracles

- training others on how to be on mission with Him
- building a community of followers

He makes it known that the Kingdom of God is open for anyone. It doesn't matter if society says you are less than worthy, His kingdom accepts all who come.

The opposition to Jesus only ramps up, to the point that even one of his own followers betrays Him, but Jesus came to show us how to love God and love others. In His ultimate act of obedience to God and love towards us, He freely gave up His life in the final act of redemption.

In His death and resurrection, God's rescue plan has been accomplished.

This is the story of the Bible, God's story, which at the same time is also our own.

-How to Read the Bible, Book by Book

The enemy, the serpent from the Garden of Eden, has been defeated. We have gone from living in a kingdom of death to a kingdom of life. The barrier that sin had created between God and humanity was removed. Because of Jesus' sacrifice, we can have fellowship with God.

While God's plan of redemption has been accomplished it is not complete. We still live in world that has been broken by sin. One day though, Jesus will return and this broken world will be made new again.

"Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Revelation 21:1-5

Questions to consider:

1. What are the 2 bottom line laws God gave us?
2. What do they look like in our every day lives?
3. How does it make you feel when you pause and think about this entire plan unfolding just for you?
4. What role do you play in the unfolding of this redemption story for all of mankind?
5. Did you notice how both Greg and Susie got emotional as they shared about the basics of the Bible? Why do you think that is? Where does that emotion stem from?
6. What is your favorite part of the redemption story short version Susie shared today?
7. Was there something new you learned today as you heard the story unfold?
8. What is something you could share with someone around you this week about this Redemption story and who will you share it with? Make a plan and actually do it!