

## The Story of the Bible

God has given humanity – even all creation – the greatest of all stories.

Of course, the Bible is filled with great stories:

- Noah and the ark
- Gideon's unlikely victory
- David and Goliath
- Elijah and the prophets of Baal
- Daniel in the lion's den
- The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem
- The healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda
- The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ

All of these are great stories. But many people don't realize that there is a greater story, one that stretches from Genesis to Revelation. It is God's big story, the story of the Bible as a whole.

God's big story is greater than anything anyone could imagine. It is the greatest of stories, but it is more than a story. This story directly impacts *everything*. Every man, woman, and child who has ever existed has a place in this story. All of creation as a place in this story.

- This is the story of all times, comprehending the past, present, and future.
- This is the story of a place – the story centers in the land of Israel.
- This is the story of a people. The story touches all people through all ages, but the story in the Old Testament focuses on the Jewish people, and the story in the New Testament focuses on the Church.
- This is the story of a Person – the emphasis and “leading man” of the whole story is Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the point of the whole story.

**Ephesians 1:9-10 tells us that Jesus is the point of the whole story.**

**Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him.**

a. [9] **Having made known to us the mystery of His will:** Part of what belongs to us under the *riches of His grace* (Ephesians 1:7) is the knowledge of **the mystery of His will**, God's great plan and purpose which was once hidden but is now revealed to us in Jesus. Through the Apostle Paul, God called us to consider the greatness of God's great plan for the ages and our place in that plan.

i. “In the New Testament sense a mystery is something which is hidden to the heathen but clear to the Christian.” (Barclay)

ii. The idea behind the word [10] **dispensation** also reflects a plan or a strategy. “The plan which the master of a family, or his steward, has established for the management of the family... it signifies, also, a plan for the management of any sort of business.” (Clarke)

b. [10] **That... He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him:** God’s ultimate plan is to bring together – to ultimately resolve – all things in Christ, either through Jesus as a Savior or Jesus as a Judge; this will happen in the **fullness of the times**.

i. The word for **gather together** has the idea of “to unite” or “to sum up.” It was used for the process of adding up a column of figures and putting the sum up at the top. Paul’s idea is that God will make all things “add up” at the end, and right now He is in the process of coming to that final sum.

ii. This is the great resolution and deliverance that even the creation groans for (Romans 8:18-22), the day when every wrong will be righted and every matter resolved according to God’s holy love and justice – *and it will happen*.

The end of the story is already written, but we want to look at the entire story. If the Bible is one story, you could say it is organized like this:

- Prelude: Eternity Past
- Introduction: Creation (Genesis 1-2)
- Act 1: The Fall and Continuing Fall of Humanity (Genesis 3-11)
- Act 2: God’s Drama of Redemption (Genesis 12-Revelation 19)
- Postscript: The Resolution of All Things (Revelation 21-22)

## **Prelude**

You could say that the story begins with God Himself, because God was before the beginning: *Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting* (Psalm 93:2). Some are troubled by the questions, “Where did God come from?” and “Who created God?” The answer is found in the definition of God – that God is the uncreated Being, eternal – without beginning or end.

This is demonstrated in several passages of Scripture. *LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God* (Psalm 90:1-2).

J. Edwin Orr used a memorable definition of God, which was thoroughly Biblical: *God is the only infinite, eternal, and unchangeable spirit, the perfect being in whom all things begin, and continue, and end.*

In eternity past – before God created anything, and all that existed was God Himself, existing in Three Persons – God launched the plan to fulfill His purpose of **gathering together in one all things in Christ Jesus** (Ephesians 1:10).

This gathering together in one all things in Christ Jesus has a wonderful result for those who want to join with God's story. They become part of the story in the most wonderful way.

## Introduction

The plan meant that God created the heavens and the earth. We speak of it in just a few sentences, but this is massive. You could say that this is *everything*. If it is true that God created the heavens and the earth and all that is in it, then the rest of the Bible isn't hard to believe.

It also means there is a Creator to Whom we must give account.

God created a universe that works with the principle of cause and effect – in other words, that actions have consequences.

Those actions and consequences were evident in the first 11 chapters of Genesis.

## Act 1: The Fall and Continuing Fall of Humanity (Genesis 3-11)

Act 1 is pretty ugly:

- Adam sinned – that had consequences.
- Cain sinned – that had consequences.
- Humanity turned from God in a radical way – that had consequences.
- Even after the flood, humanity turned against God – that had consequences.

There are many people who don't like God's story. They think He should have written a different story – one where there is no pain, no suffering, no consequence for our actions.

- It would be strange to think that the whole point of the universe should be to spare me pain or discomfort.
- It would be strange to think that actions should have no consequences; that what we do really has no meaning or importance.

- It is strange that those who think God has no right to judge feel so justified in judging God.

We don't deny the great pain and suffering in our world, and we don't wish it away with positive thinking. As we look at the world around us, we must say that we do not live in the best possible world. One less rape, one less murder, one less corrupt politician would make this a better world. So, if God is all-powerful, why didn't He make this the best possible world?

The answer is found in understanding what the best possible world is. Note the world of innocence, but the world of redemption. The best possible world is not the world that has never experienced sin and evil, but the world that has been redeemed from sin and evil. We have to see that God's work of redemption is greater than the work of creation. For God to have the allegiance and love of creatures who are to be more than robots, sin and rebellion must be allowed. And if God is going to allow sin and rebellion, He has to allow it. He can't allow it just when we want it, and stop it just when we want Him to stop it.

No, this is not the best possible world - but it is *the best way to the best possible world*. The best possible world is the world in which all things are resolved - are summed up in Jesus Christ, according to the eternal *mystery of His will* described in Ephesians 1:10 and 3:9-11. This means all true righteousness is rewarded, and all true evil is properly judged – it is the resolution of all things in Jesus.

There may be times when we don't like God's story. We find ourselves saying, "That isn't how I would do it. I would make a world where sin never existed, and I think that would be the best." There are two responses to make to this.

First of all, who cares? Who put you in charge? Are you now promoted to God?

Second, consider this. Even though God planned it so that a world that allows sin and suffering is the best possible way to the best possible world, He did not distance Himself from the pain and suffering. God in heaven added humanity to His deity, and walked among us, and the only thing that made Him do it was His love. In Jesus Christ, God experienced the pain and suffering of this life, and took upon Himself the guilt and penalty of our sin. There sits in heaven, and enthroned Lord, who can say "I know what you are going through." That should be a comfort to us all.

## **Act 2: God's Drama of Redemption (Genesis 12-Revelation 19)**

Act 2 begins in Genesis 12:

### **1. The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3).**

Now the LORD had said to Abram:

“Get out of your country,  
From your family  
And from your father’s house,  
To a land that I will show you.  
I will make you a great nation;  
I will bless you  
And make your name great;  
And you shall be a blessing.  
I will bless those who bless you,  
And I will curse him who curses you;  
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

- a. Abram: an idol worshipping Gentile.
- b. God’s call and Abram’s eventual obedience.
- c. The covenant and its terms (land, nation, blessing).
- d. The signing of covenant - Genesis 15:17-21.

## **2. The Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 24:3-8).**

So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the LORD has said we will do.” And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.” And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words.”

- a. God's intention for Israel: a nation of priests, an example to the world.
- b. The nature of the covenant (law, sacrifice, and choice).
- c. Signing the covenant: Exodus 24:3-8.
- d. The legacy of the curse: Israel's failure under the law.

i. Israel failed under the law from beginning (Exodus 32) to end (Nehemiah 10:28-31 and 13:15-18, 13:23-25).

ii. This shows their great need for a Savior, the Messiah – as shown by the third covenant.

### **3. The Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7:11b-16).**

Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house.

“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.”

a. How the covenant came about.

b. The terms of the covenant.

### **4. The New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:24-27, Jeremiah 23:5-6).**

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

a. Context of the New Covenant.

b. Terms of the New Covenant.

i. A new covenant, a different covenant (Jeremiah 31:31).

ii. A covenant of inner transformation (Jeremiah 31:33).

- iii. A covenant of intimate relationship and knowledge (Jeremiah 33:34).
  - iv. A covenant of total forgiveness (Jeremiah 33:34).
  - v. A covenant of regathering (Ezekiel 36:24).
  - vi. A covenant of cleansing (Ezekiel 36:25).
  - vii. A covenant of inner transformation (Ezekiel 36:26).
  - viii. A covenant of the outpoured Spirit (Ezekiel 36:27).
  - ix. A covenant of the reigning King, the Messiah (Jeremiah 23:5-6).
- c. The New Covenant summarized.
- a. Regathering of Israel.
  - b. Cleansing and spiritual transformation of the people.
  - c. The reign of the Messiah as King over Israel and the whole world.

The New Covenant was established through the person and work of Jesus Christ. His life and ministry are presented in the gospels.

The New Covenant was established by the blood of Jesus – the blood of the New Covenant.

Jesus left behind a New Covenant community.

Acts is the first history of that New Covenant community.

The Epistles are letters of teaching, guidance, instruction to that New Covenant community.

### **Postscript: The Resolution of All Things (Revelation 21-22)**

Revelation describes the events leading to the ultimate fulfillment of the New Covenant and God's overall great story.

Revelation 22:3-5:

*And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall*

*be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.*

a. [3] **There shall be no more curse**: Heaven will be a place where the curse is gone. Since the fall, man and creation have lived with the effect of the curse described in Genesis 3:16-19: sorrow and pain in childbirth for women, friction between the sexes, the necessity of hard and often futile work for man's sustenance, and most of all *death*.

b. [3] **His servants shall serve Him**: Heaven will be a place of work and service for God's people. However, this is a picture of the pure blessedness of service rather than arduous, curse-stained toil.

c. [4] **They shall see His face**: Heaven will be a place where God's people **see His face**, a place of intimate, face to face fellowship with God. Moses was denied the privilege of seeing God face to face (Exodus 33:20-23), but everyone in heaven **shall see His face**.

In that day there will be nothing that obscures our vision of Jesus:

- We will see Jesus clearly because sin is done away with.
- We will see Jesus clearly because care and worry are gone.
- We will see Jesus clearly because idols are done away with.

This will be the greatest glory of heaven: to know God, to know Jesus, more intimately and wonderfully than we ever could on earth. "It is the chief blessing of heaven, the cream of heaven, the heaven of heaven, that the saints shall there see Jesus."  
(Spurgeon)

d. [4] **His name shall be on their foreheads**: Heaven will be a place where God's people will forever be identified with their God, and there will never be any doubt that they belong to Him.

e. [5] **There shall be no more night there**: Heaven will be a place where the darkness of this age will be forever gone. The light is not artificial, even from the sun – God Himself is the light.

f. [5] **They shall reign forever and ever**: Heaven will be a place where God's people enjoy an eternal reign, in contrast to the limited duration of the Millennium. It will never end.

It is a perfect consummation:

- **No more curse** – Perfect *Restoration*
- **Throne in their midst** – Perfect *Administration*
- **Servants shall serve** – Perfect *Subordination*
- **Shall see His face** – Perfect *Transformation*
- **Name on foreheads** – Perfect *Identification*



- **God is the light** – Perfect *Illumination*
- **Reigning forever** – Perfect *Exultation*

## The Message of the Bible

### A. Introduction to the Bible: The Bible is absolutely unique, and special among all books ever written.

1. **Unique in its continuity:** It was written over 1600 years, over 60 generations, by more than 40 authors, on three different continents, in different circumstances and places, in different times, different moods, in three languages, concerning scores of controversial subjects, but it speaks with one united voice.
2. **Unique in its circulation:** It is the most published and popular book ever written.
3. **Unique in its translation:** It was the first book translated and has been translated into more languages than any other book in existence.
4. **Unique in its survival:** It has survived the ravages of time, manual transcription, persecution, and criticism.
5. **Unique in its honesty:** It deals with the sins and failures of its heroes in a manner quite unknown among ancient literature.
6. **Unique in its influence:** The Bible has had, far and away, a greater influence on culture and literature than any other book in the existence.

#### Bible books chart

### B. The unity and the individual pieces of the Bible.

1. Separating between the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures with a little bit of Aramaic) and the New Testament (Greek Scriptures).
2. Separating between different types of Biblical literature in the Old Testament.

#### 4 OT books slides here

- Historic.
- Poetic/Wisdom.
- Prophetic.

### C. The flow of history through the Old Testament.

#### OT flow slides start here

1. Beginnings: Genesis 1-11 (Creation, the Fall, the Flood, the Dividing of the Nations)
2. The Patriarchs: Genesis 12-50 (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph)
3. Egypt and Exodus: Exodus-Deuteronomy
4. Joshua and the Judges: Joshua, Judges, Ruth

5. The Rise and Fall of Israel's Kingdoms: 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

6. 400 "Silent" Years from the end of the Old Testament story to the start of the New Testament story.

## D. The Flow of New Testament History

1. Organizing the New Testament.

NT flow  
slides  
start  
here

a. Telling the Story: Historical and Narrative Books.

- Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke – and John
- History of God's work in the earliest Christians: The Book of Acts

b. Helping Christians: The Letters (Epistles).

- Letters of Paul: To specific churches and Christians; divided into *travel* letters, *prison* letters, and *pastoral* letters.
- General (Catholic) Letters: To Christians in general; divided among the letters of Peter, James, John, Jude, and the author of Hebrews.

c. Hope and Guidance for the Future: The Book of Revelation.

## E. Timeline of the New Testament.

While the Old Testament covers history from the beginning of creation to about 400 bc – many thousands of years – the history described in the New Testament takes less than 100 years.

- It begins with the events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist.
- Then the events surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ.
- A few mentions of the boyhood of Jesus, the fast forward.
- Jesus as a 30-year-old man beginning His ministry, which lasted some 3 years.
- Jesus taught and trained His disciples.
- Jesus taught the multitudes, teaching them about His kingdom.
- Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, and showed His authority over creation.
- Jesus confronted and exposed religious corruption.
- Jesus' most important work was in His death, burial, and resurrection.
- 40 days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven.
- The trained disciples of Jesus were left behind to carry on the work – and once they were filled with the Holy Spirit the number of disciples multiplied exponentially, despite sometimes severe persecution.
- The New Testament tells the story of the progress and multiplication of Jesus' disciples, along with the wisdom and guidance these early Christians needed.

- During the days of His earthly ministry, Jesus spoke much about His return and the events surrounding that return. The Book of Revelation completes that story.

Jesus is the point of this story, and it is no exaggeration to say that Jesus is in every book of the Bible.

Show  
Bible  
books  
chart  
for this  
list

- In **Genesis**, Jesus Christ is the Promised Savior, the Seed of the woman
- In **Exodus**, He is the Passover Lamb.
- In **Leviticus**, He is the Perfect Sacrifice.
- In **Numbers**, He is the Pillar of cloud by day and the Pillar of fire by night.
- In **Deuteronomy**, He is the Prophet like unto Moses.
- In **Joshua**, He is the Commander of the Lord's army.
- In **Judges**, He is our Deliverer.
- In **Ruth**, He is our Kinsman Redeemer.
- In **1 Samuel**, He is the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King
- In **2 Samuel**, He is the Son of David
- In **1 Kings**, He is Wiser than Solomon and the Builder of God's Ultimate Temple.
- In **2 Kings**, He is the Prophet greater than Elijah or Elisha.
- In **1 Chronicles**, He is David's ultimate royal descendant.
- In **2 Chronicles**, He is our reigning King.
- In **Ezra**, He is the Priest Proclaiming freedom.
- In **Nehemiah**, He is the Rebuilder of everything broken.
- In **Esther**, He is the Morning Star, the Protector of His people.
- In **Job**, He is our ever-living Redeemer.
- In **Psalms**, He is our Shepherd.
- In **Proverbs**, He is our Wisdom.
- In **Ecclesiastes**, He is our meaning for life.
- In the **Song of Solomon**, He is the loving Bridegroom.
- In **Isaiah**, He is the Suffering Servant.
- In **Jeremiah**, He is the Prophet warning and weeping over coming judgment.
- In **Lamentations**, He bears God's wrath with His people.
- In **Ezekiel**, He is the Glorious Lord.
- In **Daniel**, He is the fourth Man in the "fiery furnace" with His people.
- In **Hosea**, He is the faithful Husband.
- In **Joel**, He is the Outpurer of the Holy Spirit.
- In **Amos**, He brings justice to the oppressed.
- In **Obadiah**, He is the Judge of those who afflict God's people.
- In **Jonah**, He is the greatest missionary.
- In **Micah**, He is the Ruler of the world from Bethlehem.
- In **Nahum**, He is our Stronghold.
- In **Habakkuk**, he is the Watchman.
- In **Zephaniah**, He is the Mighty One Who Saves.
- In **Haggai**, He is the Desire of Nations.
- In **Zechariah**, He is the One Who Is Pierced.
- In **Malachi**, He is the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings.

- In **Matthew**, He is Messiah who is King of the Jews.
- In **Mark**, He is Messiah who is the Servant.
- In **Luke**, He is Messiah who is the Son of Man.
- In **John**, He is Messiah who is the Son of God.
- In **Acts**, He is the Ascended Lord of His Church.
- In **Romans**, He is the Righteousness of God.
- In **1 Corinthians**, He is the Wisdom and Power of God.
- In **2 Corinthians**, He is strength perfected in weakness.
- In **Galatians**, He is our Liberty.
- In **Ephesians**, He is Head of the Church.
- In **Philippians**, He the Bondservant who laid aside His rights and privileges.
- In **Colossians**, He is Creator and Pre-eminent over all things.
- In **1 Thessalonians**, He is our comfort in the last days.
- In **2 Thessalonians**, He is the Returning King.
- In **1 Timothy**, He is the Savior of the worst sinners.
- In **2 Timothy**, He is the One Mediator between God and man.
- In **Philemon**, He is our Benefactor.
- In **Titus**, He is the Blessed Hope.
- In **Hebrews**, He is our perfect and sympathetic High Priest.
- In **James**, He is the Lord of Glory and Source of living faith.
- In **1 Peter**, He is our Chief Shepherd.
- In **2 Peter**, He is the Beloved Son.
- In **1 John**, He is the source of all fellowship with God.
- In **2 John**, He is God come in the flesh.
- In **3 John**, He is the source of all truth.
- In **Jude**, He the One able to keep us from falling.
- In **Revelation**, He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! He is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Conquering King, and the One who makes all things new.

This is the best story ever. What we're going to do on these Sunday nights through the year is look at this great story from two angles.

We're going to look at it topically – in the different topics of foundational truth. So, we will spend time on Sunday nights looking at:

- The truth about the Bible
- The truth about God
- The truth about Jesus Christ
- The truth about the Holy Spirit
- The truth about Angels and Demons
- The truth about Man & Sin
- The truth about Salvation
- The truth about the Church
- The truth about God's Judgments
- The truth about the End Times

But we will also look at the Bible in its parts. On Sunday nights we will look at:

- The books of Moses, the first five books of the Old Testament.
- The historical books of the Old Testament.
- The wisdom books of the Old Testament.
- The Major Prophets of the Old Testament.
- The Minor Prophets of the Old Testament.
- The Gospel accounts of the New Testament.
- The Letters to the Early Christians.
- The Church Era, Missions Era, and the Things to Come.