

## Introduction: Before the Beginning

The Bible is a large volume of sixty-six individual books, but all comprise a single epic story from creation in the beginning to new creation in the end. In *The Bible's One Story* we will see how every part fits into the whole and help you grasp the flow of God's plan – from the garden-paradise of the first book (Genesis) to the garden-city of the last (Revelation) – surveying eleven themes with one hundred topics that tell one story.

11	100	1
Themes	Topics	Story

The series content is from Michael Vlach's book, *The Bible Storyline: God's Unstoppable Plan to Defeat Evil, Restore Creation, and Establish His Kingdom on Earth*, available for purchase in our Resource Center.

The eleven topics we'll explore over the next several months are:

- Creation
- Kingdom
- Fall
- Messianic Hope
- Seed/Descendants
- Covenants
- Nations
- Israel
- Redemption/Jesus' First Coming
- Church
- Things to Come/Jesus' Second Coming

### Prologue: ~~What~~ Who Was Before the Beginning?

Before the universe came into being—before time, space, or matter—God was there. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit existed in perfect relationship, bound together in eternal love, joy, and unity. God has always existed in joyful, personal communion, a perfect fellowship that overflowed into creation. John 1:1 opens with: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The phrase “with God” doesn't just describe location; it implies intimacy. The Word, Jesus, existed in a face-to-face relationship with the Father. Jesus Himself spoke of this timeless fellowship when He referred to “the glory I had with you before the world began” (John 17:5). And again, in prayer, He declared: “You loved me before the creation of the world” (John 17:24).

This fellowship of love between the Father and the Son has no beginning and knows no end. The Holy Spirit, too, was present in the fullness of this communion. We see all three persons of the Trinity active at the dawn of creation: the Father speaks, the Son (the Word) creates, and the Spirit hovers over the waters (Genesis 1:2). Creation flowed from the divine joy and unity within the Godhead.

This bond of love also forms the basis for God's plan to adopt us into His family. As Paul writes:

*He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. (Ephesians 1:4-5)*

Peter affirms this as well, declaring that Jesus "...was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake" (1 Peter 1:20).

Before creation commenced God was set on bringing us into fellowship with Himself. This love was meant to reach us. Jesus prayed, "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" (John 17:21).

The same unity, closeness, and relationship that exists between the Father and the Son is what Jesus wants for us. God desires to bring us into that kind of fellowship.

So this is where the Bible's Story starts: not simply with creation, but before time, with the Triune God, who in perfect love purposed to share His life with us. From this eternal love, the Story of everything unfolds.

### The Fall Before the Fall

Before mankind fell, an uprising had already erupted among the angels. God created the angels with personhood and will. They possessed the capacity to love, serve, and worship Him. They also had direct access to God Himself in heaven. But one among them became dissatisfied, desiring more. The being we now know as Satan (meaning "adversary"), along with other angels, rose up against God, attempting to overthrow His throne. Isaiah captures the words of this rebellion:

*You said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High. (Isaiah 14:13-14 ESV)*

Here we see Satan's heart filled with pride. He possessed a deep desire to be like God. He wanted to usurp Him, to claim God's glory for himself. It was an act of cosmic treason. God had placed this once-perfect being in a position of blessing, as Ezekiel explains:

*You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. (Ezekiel 28:14-15)*

Satan fell from his exalted position in Heaven, cast down in shame and defeat:

*You sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub. (Ezekiel 28:16)*

But this heavenly revolt would spread. The adversary would not rest. The battlefield would soon move to earth where the serpent would step into the garden and aim is deception at God's image-bearers. He will tempt them to follow their own desires, to forge their own path apart from God.

We'll more fully explore the tragedy in the garden later. But for now we note that the Story is bound up in a great cosmic battle. Humanity shows up in a universe at war. We arrive in an ongoing struggle between God and the forces of evil. Grasping this is crucial for understanding the Story and your place in it. To ignore this reality is to misunderstand the nature of the battle at your own peril. As Paul reminds us, this struggle is not primarily against what we see with our eyes:

*Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* (Ephesians 6:12)

This cosmic war is no myth. It is the backdrop of every chapter until we reach Revelation 21. The battlefield is earth. And darkness will attempt to thwart what God is doing.

Yet the Story does not end with rebellion. Over against pride and treason stands the rightful heir – the One through whom all things were made, and for whom all things exist – Jesus.

### The Preeminent Player in God's Drama

Before we embark on the Story as the curtain rises on creation, let's pause to behold the One who gives it meaning – Jesus. He is the preeminent One, the One through whom all things were made and for whom all things exist. The narrative we are about to trace is, at its core, His Story.

Paul announces in Colossians 1:15-20 that Jesus is the "firstborn of all creation." This is not a statement of origin or beginning, but of rank. "Firstborn" is the language of inheritance and authority. In the Old Testament, the firstborn son was the heir who carried the family's future. In the same way, Christ is declared the rightful heir of all creation, the One to whom everything belongs.

Paul tells us why: "In him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible" (Colossians 1:16). Jesus is not part of the created order. He is its Maker. Every galaxy to every grain of dust owes its existence to Him. Jesus also sustains it all: "In Him all things hold together (Colossians 1:17). And all of it rushes towards Him as its goal: "All things have been created through him and for him" (Colossians 1:16). Creation was made for Him. He is its Lord and its reason for being.

To call Jesus the "firstborn of all creation" is to recognize that He stands supreme over everything. He is the heir who will inherit all things, the ruler before whom every power must bow. Creation was designed for Him, and without Him it has no meaning.

Paul also declares that God's plan is to "bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ" (Ephesians 1:10). The One who made all things is also the One in whom history itself finds its climax and unity.

Yet as the Story unfolds this supremacy will be contested. From heaven's rebellion to earth's defiance, the Story bears witness to repeated opposition. Before humanity's rebellion, Satan lifted his heart in pride saying, "I will make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:14). At Babel, humanity echoed that rebellion: "Come, let us build ourselves a city ... so that we may make a name for ourselves" (Genesis 11:4). When Christ Himself came, the people said, "We do not want this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). Before Pilate, Israel's leaders cried, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). And in the last days, people on earth will harden their hearts, refusing to repent as the Lamb's wrath falls and His appearing draws near (Revelation 6:15-17; 9:20-21; 16:9, 11).

History is a testimony to the great cosmic war. The stage of creation is the battlefield where the rightful Heir and King is opposed. Yet it is also the very arena where His victory will be revealed and where His preeminence will one day shine without rival.

So as we begin the Story, note that all things find their meaning in Him. Creation's destiny is to glorify Jesus and to serve as the stage where His kingdom purposes unfold and where His preeminence is revealed in full.

### **Jesus - the Center of the Bible's Key Themes**

- Creation – Jesus is the Creator and Restorer of all things
- Kingdom – Jesus is the ultimate King who will reign over the ultimate Kingdom
- Fall – Jesus is the One who will reverse every consequence of the Fall
- Messianic Hope – Jesus is the promised King, Savior, Warrior, Curse Remover and Restorer of creation
- Seed/Descendants – Jesus is the ultimate Seed of the woman, Seed of Abraham, and Descendent of David
- Covenants – Jesus fulfills the Abrahamic and Davidic promises and inaugurates the New Covenant
- Nations – Jesus brings light and salvation to all nations
- Israel – Jesus is the ultimate Israelite who will save and restore the nation of Israel
- Redemption/Jesus' First Coming – Jesus is the Redeemer who redeems and secures salvation for sinners
- Church – Jesus is the Head of the Church, His body of redeemed Israelites and Gentiles
- Things to Come/Jesus' Second Coming – Jesus directs the Day of the Lord, returns in glory, and establishes His Kingdom on earth