

THE STORY: UNDERSTANDING THE BIG PICTURE OF THE BIBLE

Week 1- From 39,000 Feet

THE THEME of Scripture is the glory of God! Everything in Scripture looks toward, works toward God's glory. God is ALMIGHTY. There is no power that is greater than the God of the universe. God is SOVEREIGN – He is the supreme absolute ruler over all. God's desire is that the earth will be fill with the knowledge of – the glory of God. And, it will! Habakkuk 2:14 – *For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.* Scripture unfolds God's desire, His intent, His heart, His plan.

Ex. 25:8 - *And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.*

NOTE: II Tim. 3:16-17 - *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Exodus 25:8 highlights the truth that God's desire is to dwell with man. Ex. 25:8 is a KEY subtheme in Scripture that looks forward and ties together the one story of Scripture. If God is almighty, and He is; if He is sovereign, and He is – will His will be done? Absolutely. God said in Ex. 25:8 that His desire is to dwell with man. The Bible, then, moves toward God dwelling with man.

The theme of Scripture is the glory of God.
A subtheme is God's desire to dwell with man.

God is sovereign. He is also a personal God (Isa. 41:8 – Abraham, My friend; II Chron. 20:7 – Abraham, My friend forever; Ex. 33:11 – The Lord spoke to Moses face-to-face as a man speaks to his friend. . . . God's desire is to dwell with man.

Heb. 1:1-2 - *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,² has in these last days spoken to us by His Son.* God's desire is to fellowship, to commune with His creation. God, Who is Spirit (John 4:24), and heaven is His abode (Matt. 6:9) communicates with man. HOW? God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden. He appeared to Abraham at Abraham's tent (Gen. 18:1). Yet, God is Spirit. Who walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden? Who appeared to Abraham at his tent?

God and Abraham spoke about the destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah. Gen. 18:33 - *So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.* And then we read Gen. 19:24 - *Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens?* Who is Jehovah on earth when Sodom & Gomorrah were destroyed?

I'm suggesting that what we're seeing in Scripture – when God walked with Adam and Eve and when God appeared to Abraham - is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God – Who is God! “Pre-incarnate appearance” means Jesus appeared on earth before His incarnation – before His birth in Bethlehem. . . . God's desire is to dwell with man.

We read of the Angel of the LORD in Scripture. THE Angel of the LORD. . . . Angel means MESSENGER. . . THE MESSENGER of JEHOVAH. . . THE MESSENGER WHO HAS A WORD! The Angel of the LORD, Who is God, spoke to Abraham after God told Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. The Angel of the LORD stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac. In Gen. 22:12 we read that the Angel of the LORD said, *Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.* WHO was the One Who gave Abraham the instructions re: sacrificing Isaac? God! Who is this Angel of the LORD? GOD!

A Man wrestled with Jacob (Gen. 32:24-30). Jacob called the name of the place Peniel (Face of God) for he had seen GOD face to face.

The Angel of the LORD spoke to Moses from the burning bush – the bush that wasn't consumed (Ex. 3:1-4). And in this passage we read that God is speaking to Moses.

A Man – the Commander of the Lord of hosts – appeared to Joshua before the battle of Jericho and Joshua fell down before Him and worshipped Him (Joshua 5:13-15). Joshua worshipped a Man? Who is this Man? God does not give His glory to another (Isa. 42:8; Isa. 48:11). Joshua worshipped GOD. This “Man” is GOD!

There are many more passages in Scripture concerning THE Angel of the LORD. Why? God's desire is to communicate and to reveal Himself to man.

NOTE: The Angel of the LORD appears only in the OT. The Angel of the LORD is not found in the NT!! WHY? The Angel of the LORD is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. The Gospels record Jesus' incarnation – His birth in Bethlehem!

God has communicated and revealed Himself to us because. . .

Ex. 25:8 - God's desire is to dwell with man. . . And so, we read:

John 1:14 – *And the Word (the One Who we saw in the OT as the ANGEL of the LORD – Who had a MESSAGE) became flesh and DWELT among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

God's desire is to dwell with man.

John 14:8-9 - *Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us. ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father.*

Jesus dwelt among us. He is Immanuel – God with us – God in the flesh (Isa. 7:14). God's desire is to dwell with man.

While Jesus dwells within believers (John 17), He is not physically on earth at this time. BUT, He will return and reign upon a physical RESTORED earth. And we read:

Rev. 21:3 - *And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.*

God's desire is to dwell with man.

The one story of Scripture unfolds in the explanation of Exodus 25:8 – God’s desire to dwell with man. Our resource is the entire Bible. We looked at Genesis, Exodus, some of the Angel of the LORD passages, and John and Revelation.

The truths that we’ve already highlighted:

- THE THEME of Scripture is the glory of God.
 - God is almighty; He is sovereign.
 - God is a personal God.
 - God has always communicated with man. He has revealed Himself to man.
- A subtheme – God’s desire is to dwell with man.

Regarding the various Bible accounts, how many of you tie Noah and the universal flood in with the fallen angels? How do Abraham and David connect? Did you know that Abraham is connected to the New Covenant? These accounts and people are all interwoven. They are all a part of a bigger narrative.

How do you read the Bible? From whose perspective? Perspective is key. What’s the theme of Scripture? The glory of God! From whose perspective are we viewing the world, our lives, our days, our moments? Take note as you read/study the Bible. From whose agenda are you reading? We love Rom. 8:28 – all things work together for good. From Whose perspective? What if you’re going through trials? Did the disciples think, “This is good” when they stood at the foot of the cross? We need to glue ourselves to the unifying principle of the Bible – God’s character – Who He is!

How do we read Rom. 11:22 – *Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God?*

I’m challenging all of us through this class to NOT read Scripture from our own perspective; read it from God’s perspective. Who is this God that we profess? I’m challenging all of us to ask God to cause us to read Scripture and move through life seeing things from HIS perspective! This we can only do through the power of the Holy Spirit. When we understand what God is teaching us – when we grasp the principles that Scripture teaches – we can live them out in our lives now. Application flows from what we know about Scripture. Application flows from doctrine/from theology! Consider this: if we don’t know what God is teaching us in the Bible, what are we applying?

The Scripture is one seamless story. . . “To understand Easter, to really get it, I think you need to experience the whole story – enter the darkened theater, take your seat, and watch the tale unfold. Because the empty tomb doesn’t make sense without the cross, the cross doesn’t make sense without the manger in Bethlehem, and the manger doesn’t make sense without the Garden of Eden. It’s all one story. And only when you finally untangle it, see its scope, and enter it for yourself do you realize that the story has finally entered and, at last, untangled you.” (Story, Steven James, p. 18)

At the outset we need to see the story of the Bible in its broadest terms – from 39,000 ft. Within every story there's a plot. We need to see the plot. The Bible's plot can be summarized in four words: creation, fall, redemption and restoration! God created the earth to display His glory. It's all about God!

SCRIPTURE

THE THEME: The Glory of God (He is sovereign, personal; He communicates and reveals Himself)

A Subtheme: God's desire to dwell with man

Plot: Creation
Fall
Redemption
Restoration

Conflict:

Unifying Principle:

CREATION: God created the world as a place where He would be known, served, worshipped, and where He would be present – where He would dwell with man. Ex. 25:8 - *And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.* God created man for relationship. God desired to have a relationship with man. Gen. 1:26a - *Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. . . .* This defines man's unique relation to God. God created man as His representative on earth – to reflect His image and to nurture – to have dominion over – God's creation. Gen. 1:26b - . . . *let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.* Dominion speaks to ruling over, nurturing, and serving.

Man is the capstone of His creation. (capstone – the final stone on a building – the final stroke). Man is the crowning achievement of God. Through man, God's intent was to represent Himself:

- Man alone reflects what God is like in that we are made in His image – with will, intellect, and emotions.
- God promised man that he, man, would have dominion over the earth – over God's creation. Man would rule and nurture and serve God's creation.

THE FALL: Man rebelled. Sin entered the world. Man lost dominion over the earth. The enemy usurped dominion over God's creation. Satan is the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4), the ruler of this world (John 12:31), the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). We need to remember that God alone is OMNIpotent (ALL powerful), OMNIscient (ALL knowing), OMNIpresent (everywhere present; all is in God's presence). Satan has limitations! Satan's ability is always limited by the purposes and plans of God!

REDEMPTION: Immediately upon sin entering the world, God gave man hope and promised redemption. God promised a Redeemer. There would be redemption through this Redeemer. Redemption means to buy out of the marketplace. Who was sold in marketplaces throughout history? Slaves – those in bondage. Through sin, mankind was in bondage to Satan. Rom. 6:6 – Jesus died so that we might be freed from sin – *that we should no longer be slaves of sin*. Redemption is a breaking free of that bondage to sin/to Satan.

In the Garden, God placed a curse on Satan. Gen. 3:14 - *Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life*. And within that context of judgment, God promises the Redeemer! In speaking to Satan. . . Gen. 3:15 - *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel*. Enmity – hatred. Satan’s hatred of Eve was nothing new. It was already present. Lucifer (light-bearer, shining one) had already fallen (Isa. 14:12) He had already become “Ha Satan” – the accuser, the adversary. However, now man will, generally speaking, have antagonism/enmity/hatred towards Satan. YET, in the midst of this curse – of this hatred – of this judgment – we have been given words of hope! Words of redemption – of breaking free - came in the midst of the judgment God spoke over the serpent! That hope is THE Messiah! We see the glory of God in salvation against the backdrop of judgment. AND NOTE that this verse, this first Messianic prophecy, is speaking about the CONFLICT – the spiritual warfare that is ongoing - the battle of the ages between Satan and God. NEVER forget that God and Satan are NOT a mixed pair. Satan is NOT on par with God. Satan only has as much power as God lets him have, and not one iota more!

In your theme, subtheme, plot “chart” on pg. 4 of your handout – write in spiritual warfare on the conflict line.

In Gen. 3:15 we clearly see “the Seed of the woman” Who is the Redeemer. The Messiah would be born of a woman – alone. A woman doesn’t have a seed; a woman has an egg. This would be a supernatural birth. A virgin birth is prophesied.

In Gen. 3:15 we read that Satan would bruise the heel of this Seed of the woman. The Messiah, is bruised on the heel at the cross at the crucifixion. The woman’s Seed would bruise the head of Satan. Satan was dealt a death blow (to the head, so to speak) at the cross. Heb. 2:14 – *Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, (He became flesh, dwelling with man) that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil* Jesus, through death destroyed Satan who had the power of death. What seemed like Satan's moment of triumph when Jesus was crucified, was actually Satan’s greatest defeat - because Jesus then rose from the grave and conquered man's greatest oppressor - death. Satan had the power of death.

In this context of mankind's sin, his rebellion against God, God promises the defeat of Satan and the victory of the Redeemer. And, from this victory springs hope and the promise of redemption and ultimate restoration. And so we move forward in the Bible seeing this story unfold!

Scripture teaches us that the basis of redemption is – blood. The Seed of the woman would be bruised. He would shed His blood and die. God demonstrated the requirement of blood/a life for a life through fashioning animal skins to cover Adam and Eve. The fig leaves that Adam and Eve fashioned (their own works) to cover their nakedness were replaced with animal skins. Blood was shed to cover their sin. Who killed the innocent animal? God! (Gen. 3:21) And, we see a substitutionary sacrifice in this account – the innocent animal dying in place of Adam and Eve. In Lev. 17:11 God declared that He requires blood to atone for sin – to cover sin.

Gen. 3:15 – the first Messianic prophecy – unfolds more for us. Here in Gen. 3:15 we see two lines of descent in this verse! These two lines of descent are noted throughout the Bible. While the ultimate Seed of the woman is the Messiah – Jesus, there is also a collective seed. We see the battle of the centuries between the people of God and the followers of the devil. While the overarching battle is between Satan and the ultimate Seed of the woman, Jesus, we live in a world that is engaged in a wrestling match between life and death, between good and evil, between God and His adversary. Therefore we read in Eph. 6:12 - . . . *we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age,^[c] against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.* The earth is the theater for ongoing spiritual warfare. The ongoing conflict, spiritual warfare, surrounding GOD, surrounding redemption continues. The remainder of the Bible is an unfolding of God's plan of redemption which He set in motion through His promise in Gen. 3:15. We've briefly seen creation, the fall, redemption. . .

The unifying principle of the Bible is the character/reputation of God! Write that in your "chart" in the Unifying Principle line. God is God and His will is NEVER thwarted. There is no Plan B or M or Z. There's only Plan A. God promised a way – ONE way – back to Him – through the Seed of the woman – the Messiah.

And so, creation, the fall, and redemption – all lead to. . .

RESTORATION: God will deliver what He has promised.

- He promised redemption – freedom from sin (Isa. 33:24 – the people who will dwell on high with the king will be forgiven their iniquity; Jer. 31:34 – I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more)
- He promised that redeemed man, the saints, those declared righteous, those set apart to God by God would be given dominion over the earth (Dan. 7:27). Satan usurped that dominion. Satan is the god of this earth. BUT GOD will give man dominion.

- Man will receive his destiny; man will be given dominion over God's creation because that's plan A. Dan. 7:13, 14, 27 – At the Second Coming, the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven, will come to the Ancient of Days and receive the Kingdom of God which the Son of Man will then give to the saints of the Most High – that they may have dominion over it.
- God promised that Israel as a nation will be restored (Deut. 30; Hosea 5:15; Zech. 12; Matt. 23. . . .).

Within God's plan we see that the curse on the earth would be removed.

Rom. 8:21 - *the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God*

Isa. 11:6-9 - *The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. ⁹ They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.*

Within God's plan we see a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21; Isa. 65:17-25).

RESTORATION! The fulfillment of all that God had originally decreed!

Swooping down to about 20,000 ft. . . there's conflict in the story. We see enmity/hatred. . . Cain kills Abel. The first human born, Cain, murdered the second human born, his brother, Abel! Sin caused man to spiral downward. In Genesis 5, in the telling of the family of Adam, we read a recurring phrase: so and so "had sons and daughters. So all the years of so-and-so's life were (fill in the blank) -- and he died." Does this not speak to mankind's sinful condition? This phrase also highlights 2 contrasting realities:

- God told man to be fruitful and multiply – so man had children.
- God told man that if he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would surely die – and man did die – physically and spiritually (separation from God).

In Genesis 6 we read of a universal flood. The people who perished in the flood died because they refused to acknowledge God. Man's wickedness was great in the earth. Every intent of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil. Noah, on the other hand, found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Noah is described as righteous, blameless, and obedient in that he "walked with God" (Genesis 6:9). Eight people survived the flood. Was the world home free? NO! After the flood we read that . . . *the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. . . .* Gen. 8:21. Sin continued. In Adam's day, in Noah's day, the Seed of the woman hadn't as yet arrived! BUT the promise remained! Spiritual warfare continued and it continues today. BUT the promise remains.

After two thousand years of dealing with mankind – not Jew and Gentile – just mankind, God called Abram and created Israel through Abram’s descendant Jacob – the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jacob – whose name was changed to Israel. It is through Abram’s physical descendants – the Jewish people - that the Messiah would come. It is through the tribe of Judah that Jesus would trace His lineage.

“God responded to Satan’s pride with the humility of Jesus. God answered the rebellion of Satan with the obedience of Jesus. All the misery and rage of Satan is overwhelmed by the grace and love of Jesus, Who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross (Heb. 12:2). That cross is the plot’s great twist: the long awaited hero, the Redeemer, came, and He was not only rejected but killed. Killed dead. Put in the tomb. Then hope rose from the dead. The death of Christ was not His defeat but His conquest. God judged sin, condemned it, and Christ dies on the cross to pay the penalty for sin. Through the judgment that fell on Jesus, God saves all who will trust in Him.” (What is Biblical Theology? James M. Hamilton Jr.) The goodness of God and the severity of God.

Jesus met God’s righteous demands. Because of the death of Jesus, because of the judgment that fell on Jesus, God the Father shows mercy and grace to those who repent (change of mind; God grants repentance [II Tim. 2:25]) and place their trust in Jesus alone for their salvation. (Repentance is not a work; it is granted by God. Our faith is given to us by God [Eph. 2:8-9]. Consider Eph. 2:1 – we were dead in our trespasses and sins and GOD made us alive!) Jesus will return as conquering King to judge His enemies. Those who have trusted in Him will dwell with Him in a restored earth during the Millennial Kingdom.

Creation, fall, redemption, restoration. Do you grasp the “plot” of Scripture? Follow the plot through Scripture from Genesis through Revelation. Who is at the helm? GOD! God is in control – He is sovereign. God desires to dwell with man. Are we moving toward God’s physical, material, earthly kingdom being established where God will dwell with man? YES! Why? Because God’s will cannot be thwarted. There is indeed a spiritual aspect of the kingdom of God. Jesus told the Jewish leader/teacher Nicodemus, “You must be born again” – born from above – internally – God giving you a new heart and putting His spirit upon you and forgiving your sins (Jer. 31:31-34; Eze. 36:24-27). In order to enter into the physical kingdom of God that Jesus establishes when He physically returns after the Tribulation – you must be born again, redeemed!

How are we assured of all this? Because of Who God is. The unifying principle of the Bible is the character of God.

Genesis provides us with the key to what God is planning. The means by which God is going to accomplish His purpose.

- Because God is Who He is, He will restore His original plan. Everything that was lost must be restored (and even enhanced). For God’s credibility to be intact, everything must be restored.

Isn't it a relief that the world's destiny is not wrapped around the brief span of our lives? We can then make sense of our days in light of the overarching narrative. The BIG PICTURE of the Bible, with its guarantee of resurrection and restoration, gives us confidence even in the face of death. Glory to God!

QUESTIONS:

What is the theme of Scripture?

What is a key subtheme?

What is the plot of Scripture?

What is the conflict?

What is the unifying principle of Scripture?

What was new to you? Any V8 moments? (A-ha moments?)

How does what we discussed help you in your Bible study and in your Bible knowledge?

Give an example.

How does this impact you moving forward in your study?

What questions do you have?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Begin a journal. How will you move forward this week knowing that God seeks His glory to be manifested and to be known in the world and in our lives?

Find additional passages re: the Angel of the LORD in the OT.

What other passages speak to God's desire to dwell with man.

Read the notes for week 2 when you receive them.