

THE KING'S STORY (1)

Getting Started

A. Introduction

1. The Bible is a story.

"The Bible is most of all a Story. It's an adventure story about a young Hero who comes from a far country to win back his lost treasure. It's a love story about a brave Prince who leaves his palace, his throne – everything – to rescue the one he loves... There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one Big Story. The Story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them. It takes the whole Bible to tell this Story." (Sally Lloyd-Jones)

It is one continuous and consistent story.

It is a story that begins at the start of history and finishes at the end of history.

It is a story that progressively unfolds.

It is a story that can be summed up in four words: Creation→ Fall→ Redemption→ New Creation.

"It's about God creating the world, about the fall, about God's re-entry into history to create a new people for himself and eventually about a new creation out of a marred and broken world through Christ." (Tim Keller)

It is a story which reveals an amazing God.

2. The Bible is a story that makes God's glory known.

It has the purpose of proclaiming to us the glory of God.

Oh, the depth of the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments and untraceable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor? And who has ever given to God, that he should be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen." (Romans 11:33-36)

"All that is ever spoken of in the Scripture as an ultimate end of God's works, is included in that one phrase, the glory of God; which is the name by which the ultimate end of God's works is most commonly called in Scripture; and seems most aptly to signify the thing." (Jonathan Edwards)

What is the glory of God?

"Then Moses said, "Please, let me see your glory." He said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim the name 'the LORD' before you." (Exodus 33:18-19)

"The LORD came down in a cloud, stood with him there, and proclaimed his name, "the LORD." The LORD passed in front of him and proclaimed: The LORD – the LORD is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth, maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But he will not leave the guilty unpunished, bringing the consequences of the fathers' iniquity on the children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation." (Exodus 34:5-7)

"The glory of God is the weight of the majestic goodness of who God is, and the resulting name or reputation, that he gains from his revelation of himself as Creator, sustainer, judge and redeemer, perfect in justice and mercy, loving-kindness and truth." (Jim Hamilton Jr.)

God's glory is supremely made known in Jesus Christ.

"For God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6)

3. The Bible is a story about Jesus Christ.

Every book, every chapter, every verse at least whispers, but often shouts His name.

If we don't see how every part of Scripture is related to Jesus, we will miss the whole point of it.

"He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Wasn't it necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures." (Luke 24:25-27)

"He told them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled." (Luke 24:44)

"You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, and yet they testify about me." (John 5:39)

"...you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15)

A right understanding of the Bible will see it not as 66 separate books, but as a single book with a single plot – God's glory displayed through Jesus Christ.

"Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. He also said to them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead the third day, and repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:45-47)

B. Salvation through Judgment¹

1. A story of salvation achieved through judgment.

God's glory is made known as He saves His people.

Salvation shows God to be a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth, maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin.

God's glory is also made known as He judges His enemies.

Judgment shows God to be the one who will not leave the guilty unpunished.

3. God's salvation of His people comes through God's judgment of Jesus in their place at the cross.

"...they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God presented him as the mercy seat by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. God presented him to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be just and justify the one who has faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:24-26)

"Everyone who gets saved is saved through judgment. All who flee to Christ and confess that he is Lord and that God raised him from the dead do so because they realize their need for a Saviour. They realize their need for a Saviour because they become convinced that God is holy, that they are sinful, and that God will judge. In a sense, they feel the force of God's condemning justice. They sense the weight of the wrath that remains upon them, and they recognise that Jesus is their only hope. Thus, historically (in Christ on the cross) and existentially (in their own experience of the wrath of God that makes them feel their need for Christ), believers are saved through judgment." (Jim Hamilton Jr.)

C. Kingdom through Covenant²

1. A story of kingdoms established through covenants.

¹ Adapted from God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment by James Hamilton Jr.

² Adapted from The Mystery of Christ by Samuel Renihan

This is perhaps the best way of understanding the story of the Bible, because all the big themes of the Bible find a place within this.

God establishes kingdoms and rules over them by means of covenants.

What is the significance of a covenant?

"Covenants establish the boundaries of a kingdom, appoint federal heads, grant promises, impose laws, define the offspring of the federal head, and specify all other pertinent and necessary details of how God will exercise His dominion through the federal head and his offspring." (Sam Renihan)

"Simply put, a covenant is an arrangement or contract between two parties that include the terms of their relationship, covenant obligations (stipulations), and blessings and curses." (Michael Kruger)

2. In the story of the Bible we learn about three kingdoms, each established by its own distinct covenants, and which come together in one kingdom of God under one King, Jesus Christ.

i) The Kingdom of Creation is established through the covenant of works and Noahic covenant.

In the covenant of works, God gave responsibility of ruling over creation to Adam and his descendants promising eternal life for obedience. When Adam broke the covenant, so did all humanity with him, and the covenant of works condemned and cursed everyone. But God in His grace made a promise of salvation.

In the covenant with Noah, God promises to restrain His wrath and preserve the world in order that the promise of salvation could be kept.

ii) The Kingdom of Israel is established through the covenants with Abraham, Moses, and David.

In the Abrahamic covenant, God promises Abraham that his offspring will inherit the Promised Land and if they live under His rule, they will enjoy His blessings which will flow out to the nations. It will be one of Abraham's descendants that will bring the blessing of salvation to the world.

In the Mosaic covenant, what it means for Abraham's descendants, the people of Israel, to live under God's rule in the land, is defined by the law of God. Obeying the law will bring God's blessing. Disobeying the law will bring God's curse including exile from the Promised Land.

In the Davidic covenant, the kingdom of Israel is focused into one person, the king, who was commanded to keep the law of God on behalf of the nation. If the king keeps the law, the kingdom will be blessed by God. If he breaks the law, the kingdom will be cursed by God.

iii) The Kingdom of Christ is established through the covenant of redemption and the new covenant of grace.

In the covenant of redemption, God promised in eternity past to save a people for Himself. What the Father planned, the Son accomplished, and the Spirit applies. This plan was announced in history as the gospel is preached to Adam, and then progressively revealed through the covenants made with Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the new covenant promised by the prophets.

"the covenants of the promise" (Ephesians 2:12)

In the new covenant of grace, the promise of salvation is kept as Jesus did all that was necessary for the condemnation and curse upon humanity to be reversed and eternal life with God to be provided. Those who trust in Christ from all the nations of the world will enjoy the blessings of sins forgiven and reconciliation with God. Membership of the Kingdom of Christ is defined by a person's relationship to Jesus.

One day the Kingdom of Christ will come to its ultimate end as King Jesus returns to raise and judge all humanity, to bring His people to everlasting life in the new heavens and new earth, and to send the wicked to everlasting punishment in hell.

D. What does this mean for us?

1. If we want to know God, we need to know the King's Story.

Why?

Because it is through this story that God makes Himself known.

2. If we want to read the Bible and understand the gospel correctly, we need to know the King's story.

Why?

Because if we don't know the story, we are in danger of making Scripture say something it never intended to say or miss seeing what it tells us about Jesus.

Prosperity teaching and affirmation of sin by local churches has arisen because the Bible has not been read and taught correctly and the story has not been understood.

3. If we want to get the mission of the church right, we need to know the King's Story.

Why?

Because the story keeps the proclamation of the gospel as the means of making new disciples and making mature disciples at the heart of the church's mission.