

THE BIBLE STORYLINE and your part in it...

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Introduction - Recap

PROPOSITION

Help you better understand:

- the Bible Storyline (narrative).
- God's unfolding Plan and Purpose for humanity.
- How you fit into God's Story.

OUTCOMES: WHAT I WANT FOR YOU!

- a. Freedom Experienced.
- b. Fruitfulness Increased.
- c. Faith Activated.
- d. Future Hope.
- e. Fellowship with God Unhindered.
- f. Focus - Intentional Living.

SEE THE BIBLE AS A STORY

- The Bible communicates the reality about God, humanity, and the cosmos through a collection of interconnected stories that form a unified narrative.
- Understanding God's purpose and plan for humanity enables us to harmonise with it, and live in step with God.
- Tim Keller says: *"People cannot make sense of anything without attaching it to a storyline."*
- God, the author of every part of the Bible, tells one overarching story about the world he created. here is a basic storyline to which all the parts relate and which makes sense of all the pieces.
- The Bible tells us that God is real and **created** the universe, that humanity **fell**, that Jesus came to **redeem** what was lost, and that one day, Jesus will return in glory and finally **restore** everything!

THE BIBLE STORY IN FOUR SCENES

1. **Creation**
2. **Fall**
3. **Redemption**
4. **Restoration**

THE BIBLE STORY IN FOUR SCENES

- It is important to systematise the study of Scripture with other biblical truths to gain **context** and help us understand what we believe.
- So, my first approach to understanding the Bible, primarily influenced by my theology training, was to see it as silos of doctrine.
- I came close to thinking that ordinary believers could not easily understand the Bible. However, I found it helpful to look at Scripture as a story with a meta-narrative with scenes in it.
- The call to follow Jesus is nothing less than a call to play our part in God's big story!

WE COULD SUMMARISE THE BIBLICAL STORY AS:

1. God **created** a very good world described in **Genesis. 1-2**.
2. Adam and Eve **fell** into sin and its impact on the world is described in **Genesis 3-11**.
3. God's plan of **redemption** unfolding for his fallen creation is described from **Genesis 12 to Revelation 20**.
4. The story starts in a garden (the Garden of Eden) and ends in a city (the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven). **Revelation 21 and 22** describe the consummation and God's **restoration**.

1. CREATION: GOD'S ORIGINAL DESIGN Slide # 5

- In the beginning, God's creation was formless, empty and dark before he said, "Let there be light." This act of creation, bringing order out of chaos.
- In essence, all human creative activity mirrors this process.
- **Genesis 1:26-27** *"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them"*.
- This mandate is a joyful vision for human flourishing within God's created order.
- God created the world and everything in it through His powerful Word. And it was very good. He ruled over all his creation as the Sovereign King.
- God took special care to form humans. He breathed His own life into them, making man and woman bear His image and likeness.
- The most foundational truth of human existence is that God makes us in his image to be his representatives in his created world.
- As God's image bearers, we reflect his attributes.
- Women and men share humanity's status as divine image-bearers and representatives. In many societies and segments of the church, however, this balance has been tilted away from women, their role in this mandate is restricted to being fruitful and multiplying.
- In God's world, both women and men play multifaceted roles in the work of human flourishing.

- God blessed man with fruitfulness and gave them the mandate to multiply, fill the earth with more image-bearers, and rule over it. That way, God's glory would expand to fill the whole world!
- **Genesis 1:28** ESV *And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*
- Adam and Eve were created to respond appropriately to God, each other, and his creation.

2. THE FALL: SIN SEPARATED US FROM GOD

- **Genesis 3:6** *"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate."*
- The first humans listened to the serpent, doubted God's goodness and justice, and chose to rebel against His Word.
- They were separated from the holy and just God because of their sin, and they began to fill the earth with people who followed in their rebellious ways. This is how pain, suffering, injustice, and wickedness darken our world.
- So, we can say that the fall led to human beings creating a culture that does not reflect God's nature. The foundation for perfect culture was destroyed, leaving all relationships broken: God to humanity, person to person, and person to creation.
- To deny God's order is to bring in disorder. Sin made us broken people who brought brokenness into creation.
- This was a profound shift from a good world to a world gone wrong!
- The fall into sin, initiated by Adam and Eve in the garden, has had profound and far-reaching effects on every level of existence.
- Sin's influence is all-encompassing. It affects us individually, collectively, and cosmically. God's once-perfect creation is now twisted and manipulated for evil purposes.
- **Ephesians 2:1-3** ESV *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*
- But we also need to realise that sin did not annihilate the goodness of God's creation. For example, sexual sin and lust do not eliminate the goodness of human sexuality.
- What God made as good, humanity lost, and humanity died. Humanity needs redemption! Humanity lost its ability to be good. Only Jesus can make us good by giving us his goodness.

3. REDEMPTION: JESUS BOUGHT BACK THAT WHICH WAS LOST

- God made a way for us to be redeemed. From beginning to end, Scripture points to Jesus, the perfect sacrifice needed to reconcile man to the Father and restore what has been lost.
- **Galatians 4:4-6** *"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."*
- It is essential to realise that the expansion of God's glory to fill the earth despite the prevalence of sin is not based on our adequacy but on God's promise to make us holy.
- God, in His mercy, did not leave us in our broken and cursed state. In love, He became a man and entered into our suffering to redeem us (and all of creation) from the curse brought on by our sin.
- Though He was entirely righteous, He sacrificed the penalty for our sin on the cross. He was buried and victoriously rose again. This is how He redeemed us from the power of sin and removed the curse of death.
- Those who trust in His work are forgiven, cleansed, made new, and graciously welcomed into His eternal family, the Church.
- God bought us back unto Himself through Jesus and restored our mandate to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth with His image-bearers.
- **Matthew 28:18-20** *"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"*
- This commission is a fulfilment of the mandate given to humanity at creation.
- The Fall made our stewardship more difficult. However, following in Christ's footsteps, enabled by him, humanity is absolutely able to stand against its consequences.
- Through its transformative power, redemption can and does reverse the effects of the fall in all areas of creation. It offers the promise of restoration and cleansing from the consequences of sin.
- Just as the fall impacts all areas of God's creation, redemption applies to all areas of life. We should not only focus on personal or individual redemption, which is foundational, but also on corporate and cosmic redemption.
- **Colossians 1:19-20** *ESV For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself **all things**, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.*
- **Romans 8:19-21** *ESV For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the **creation itself will be set free** from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

- We need to participate in God's purpose to redeem all things. his purpose is not just about saving individual souls but about restoring and renewing all aspects of creation to their original state of goodness and harmony.
- **Abraham Kuyper, a prominent theologian, said there is not one inch of creation where God does not say, "Mine."** This quote underscores the comprehensive nature of God's sovereignty and the extent of his redemptive work in the world.
- **Matthew 6:9-10** *ESV Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

4. RESTORATION: A NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH

- **Revelation 21:1-3** *"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."*
- After the news of redemption through Christ has spread to all who will believe, Jesus will come again to restore all things to God. All who have trusted in Christ will be resurrected from the dead to eternal life with our King. All who persist in rebellion against God will be condemned to eternal death. All pain, suffering, injustice, and wickedness will be finally defeated.
- At this point, even Heaven and Earth will be made new. This New Heaven and New Earth will be reunited, and God will dwell with His redeemed and resurrected people forever in this glorious New Creation.
- We will have glorified bodies. No more sickness and pain.
- The end of the journey is a reward. No judgement. Jesus is returning to establish a new heaven and earth, and we can fully enjoy it.

CONCLUSION

- Most Christians were taught the story where the first and last scenes are chopped off, leaving a middle section of fall and redemption.
- This leads to a distorted view that individual salvation is the only relevant concern for believers. They say it is best to retreat from the world and let it go its own way. Anything else is a waste of time and a flirtation with worldliness.
- Destination is heaven. I am waiting for the rapture!
- From the beginning, humanity was mandated to represent God as his image bearers and bring God's goodness to his world. Although compromised by the fall, the mandate remains in place and is fulfilled in Christ.
- In the Great Commission, Jesus told his disciples to teach everything he commanded. At the heart of this teaching is the Gospel message of Jesus' death and resurrection on behalf of sinners. But it also includes everything else in Scripture, including God's first instructions to the original human couple. All of it finds its shape and flows from the Gospel, which is God's plan for humanity.